THE AMOURS OF HENRI DE NAVARRE AND OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS

By Lieut.Col. A·C·P·HAGGARD



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THE AMOURS OF HENRI DE NAVARRE AND OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS



Henri de Navarre

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By LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O. - - - - -

Author of "Sidelights on the Court of France," "Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette," "Two Great Rivals," etc.

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The Amours of Henri de Navarre and of Marguerite de Valois

CHAPTER I

Henri and Marguerite

HENRI DE NAVARRE—the gallant Henri IV.; Marguerite de Valois—famous as La Reine Margot—these are two names which will never be forgotten in France.

The former was the first of the Bourbons to ascend the French throne; the latter, Henri's cousin and first wife, the last legitimate representative of the Valois dynasty.

While France still looks back with pride to the "Béarnais," the Prince who, originally a Protestant, fought so nobly to establish himself on a Catholic throne, it is not merely on account of his bravery and his subsequent humanity that he maintains a place in the heart of her people. There is another reason to endear the name of Henri de Navarre to a race always frivolous, gay, and light-hearted. This is that the immense number of his *affaires de cœur*, the innumerable love-intrigues by which the Navarrese Prince made himself famous, proved him to be so essentially a Frenchman, one of the people themselves.

Gallant in both senses of the word, Henri stands out by his amours as by his prowess in the tented field; whether in pursuit of a lady or of an enemy, he was deterred by no difficulties, shrank before no obstacles. The Frenchman or Frenchwoman of to-day yet speaks complacently of this *preux chevalier*, of their King who so gaily shone alike in the battle-field and in the boudoir.

Things being thus, it is no matter of astonishment if, whether as Kingdom, Empire, or Republic, France has ever maintained Henry IV. on his pedestal as a national hero; if, even during the bloody days of the Reign of Terror, the *sans-culottes* who flung out upon the dunghill the bones of the other Kings spared the dust of Henri de Navarre. Neither does the France of to-day ever forget the fact that this brave and libertine Prince often expressed the wish "that every peasant might have a fowl in the pot" for his Sunday's dinner.

Long-headed, shrewd, good-humoured, calculating, devil-may-care, ungrateful, and amorous to excess—such were the attributes of the Protestant son of the Bourbon Prince, Antoine Duc de Bourbon, and Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre in her own right. This Princess was the niece of François I., and first cousin of Henri II., King of France, while Henri II. was the father of Marguerite de Valois, who was the youngest of his children by Catherine de Médicis, of evil memory.

While even by his best friends Henri de Navarre, Prince de Béarn, could never have been described as being handsome, his cousin Marguerite was the beauty of her day. Discounting, as we must, the fulsome praise and adulation of Brantôme, in his *Vies des Dames Illustres*, there is plenty of testimony to this effect, independent of that of Pierre de Bourdeille, a courtier who, when only

sixteen years of age, had been presented with the revenues of that Abbey of Brantôme, of which the name clung to him as being its Abbé et Seigneur.

In other matters than where good looks were concerned there were various points of resemblance between the youthful Marguerite and her Navarrese cousin. In an age of inhumanity she showed herself a humane Princess—indeed, only two assassinations are laid to the charge of this daughter of a Florentine mother—and these more or less justified by the ethics of the day. Courage she undoubtedly possessed, but of morals, like Henri de Navarre, from her tenderest years Marguerite was utterly devoid. Before, in his boyhood, the hero of Arques and Ivry had commenced to embark upon his lifelong course of love-making, Marguerite had already commenced her career of youthful gallantry—a career only to terminate with her death at an advanced age.

In one respect, above all others, did Marguerite resemble Henri : this was in her light-heartedness under misfortune, and her extraordinary capability of getting the best out of a bad situation. By her smiles, her cajoleries, and her immoralities, we find her at one time practically reduced to defending herself, in a state of warfare, against both her despicable and immoral brother, Henri III., and her virile and immoral husband, the King of Navarre. Yet what does she do? By the adroit use of these very smiles and cajoleries the frivolous Queen takes the captor captive. The commander of her brother's forces, who holds her a prisoner in a strong fortress, falls at her feet—even his wife becomes her tool owing to her flatteries. She takes advantage of their weakness to make her gaoler join the King's enemies, then puts out both husband and wife, and reigns for

many years as Queen in a small but absolute Sovereignty of her own. Thence she cannot be ejected by either her brother before his assassination or her husband when, after that event, he becomes the King of France. Her castle is the perpetual abode of love, her servitors are bound to her not only by the allegiance of a subject to a Monarch, but by that of the lover to the bright eyes of his mistress.

Clever woman as she is, eventually, when the proper time arrives, Marguerite makes terms with her husband, helps him to obtain a divorce against herself, issues from her retreat, comes to Paris, and lives on most affectionate sisterly relations with one whose glaring lapses from marital fidelity had formerly been no less remarkable than her own.

Owing to the mutual tolerance of this singularly good-natured couple, it is evident from the *dénouement* that there need never have been any serious cause for disagreement between them save for two reasons. The first of these was the deliberate stirring up of strife between them by interested myrmidons and minions, male and female, of Marguerite's mother, Catherine de Médicis, and her brother, Henri III.—above all by Henri III. himself. The second reason was that Marguerite, although some chroniclers credit her with having been the mother of one, others of two illegitimate sons, was never fortunate enough to present her husband with an heir, whose appearance would have consolidated her position, and rendered all the machinations of her enemies of no account.

A further point of similarity between the Bourbon Prince and the Valois Princess with whom we shall concern ourselves in these pages, lay in the absence of

heart, the want of prolonged and sustained depth of feeling, by which each was characterised. While the proneness to sudden affection and passion, the readiness to commit any folly to gratify the desire of the moment were the attributes of both, no sooner was either the one or the other of this Royal couple deprived of the object of the devotion of the hour than the presence of some new object of pursuit wiped out all memory of the past.

There was a slight dissimilarity between them, however. While Henri IV., after eventually gaining a firm seat upon the throne, treated all his old co-religionists among the Huguenots, who had fought by his side, with the utmost ingratitude and forgetfulness, and never gave a thought to his former mistresses, Marguerite both herself wrote and caused others to write for her tender and sentimental verses in memory of her former lovers. Moreover, she is said to have preserved the hearts of those who were dead, and they were many, in silver boxes, which she carried, in the numerous pockets of her immense farthingale or crinoline, around her person.

CHAPTER II

Henri's Parentage and Early Years

1553—1568

Henri de Navarre sprung from a fine fighting stock of turbulent ancestors on both his father's and mother's side. Through his mother he was descended from those riotous princes of the Pyrenean frontier—the d'Albrets and de Foix—who had ruled the kingdom of Navarre, either in their own right or that of their wives, for about a hundred years before he first saw the light at Pau, on December 14th, 1553. These Princes of Gascony, in whose veins ran much Spanish blood, were by no means celebrated for the purity of their mode of living, and most of them were not only warlike but cruel, ever as ready to slit the throat of a near relative as that of an enemy of a different race. The Kingdom over which they ruled, that of Navarre, lay on both sides of the Pyrenees, by far the larger portion of it being on the Spanish side of the mountain chain, until, in the year 1512, Ferdinand and Isabella wrested all of Spanish Navarre from Queen Catherine de Foix and her husband, King Jean d'Albret. Thereafter, with Lower or French Navarre, Béarn and Albret, which latter was a fief of the French Crown, the Kings and Queens of Navarre held large possessions in France, and also the

rank of Lieutenant of the King of France in the province of Guyenne.

In the time of Jeanne d'Albret's father and mother, Henri II. d'Albret and Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of François I. of France, great improvements had been made in the two capitals of the restricted kingdom that remained to them. These were Nérac, in the north of Béarn, and Pau in the south, and while, by the taste of the refined Queen Marguerite, the Royal castles in these places were modernised and beautified with all the spirit of the Renaissance, the surrounding country was reclaimed from savagery by her husband, and richly cultivated.

If Henri II. was as capable as an agriculturist as he was courageous in war, this Prince of the House of Albret, who was eleven years his wife's junior, was notoriously a bad husband, one whose infidelities were so openly indulged in as to rival the conduct at the French Court of his brother-in-law, François I.

When Marguerite died Jeanne d'Albret and her husband, Antoine de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, hurried from France to Navarre, fearing lest the King of Navarre should, by his will, make over the whole of his possessions to his various mistresses. Jeanne, who had already lost two boys from the carelessness of their nurses, was enceinte at the time of her arrival at Pau. When she begged her father to leave his Kingdom to his expected offspring, Henri d'Albret, who was of a jocular turn of mind, promised to do so upon a singular condition. This was that, in return for a will made in the child's favour delivered over into her keeping, Jeanne was to sing lustily a Basque hymn to the Virgin during the period of her accouchement. The reason for this ex-

traordinary request was, so said the King of Navarre, that, two puling infants having already been lost, he wished this time to have no whimpering but a lusty baby brought into the world.

Jeanne complied with her father's wishes, and thus, in the most extraordinary manner on record, was the famous Prince of Béarn brought into the world.

His grandfather's conduct was as strange to the new-born infant as it had already been to the mother. Taking the child in his arms wrapped in a dressing-gown, King Henri II. rubbed its gums with garlic, and then compelled it to drink, not milk, but Gascon wine. Strange to relate, the infant, named Henri after his grandfather, survived, but not without difficulty, that grandfather's kind attentions and initial hospitality. No less than eight wet nurses had to be found, and tried, before the boy could be induced to take his food properly.

A few years later Jeanne succeeded her father on the throne of Navarre, and, after deep thought, adopted the Reformed religion. From her earliest youth she had been a Princess of great determination, as had been shown in the case of her first and forced marriage to the Duke of Cleves, when she refused to go to the altar until her uncle, François I., caused her to be carried thither by the Constable Anne de Montmorency. Her self-will, however, prevailed over that of her uncle—she never lived with the Duke of Cleves, who eventually divorced her in consequence. By no means too straight-laced in her youth, no Princess enjoyed herself more, or was more extravagant than was Jeanne d'Albret, until she married that giddy young Prince of the Blood Royal, Antoine de Bourbon, her union with whom was as much the result of mutual admiration as of

the policy of King Henri II. of France, Jeanne's first cousin.

Antoine, who by courtesy was called King of Navarre, was dashing but dissipated. Although, while making the Reformed religion that of her Kingdom, Jeanne made of her husband a Protestant also, she found that he was not to be relied upon to be either true to his religion or to her.

In the religious wars which commenced in France after the reign of Henri II. the King of Navarre was, like his brother Louis, first Prince de Condé, to be found at first on the side of the Huguenots. After, in 1559, Henri II. had been accidentally killed in a tourney by the lance of Gabriel Montgomery, Comte de Lorges, Captain of the Scottish Archers, Catherine de Médicis assumed that supremacy in the kingdom of France which she retained during the reigns of her three sons—François II., Charles IX., and Henri III. The Florentine Queen having, after considerable vacillation, made up her mind that the Catholic party was likely to prove the stronger, ceased to allow the open indulgence at Court of the Reformed religion which she had previously encouraged. She now attempted the seduction of both Antoine and his brother Condé by the use of the wiles of her gang of immoral so-called ladies of honour, who passed by the name of the Queen-mother's Flying Squadron.

The King of Navarre was soon completely subjugated by one of these fascinating sirens, named Mademoiselle du Rouet; while Louis de Condé, after being imprisoned, and released when François II. died in 1560, was captured in a similar manner by the lascivious graces of Mademoiselle de Limeuil.

Antoine de Bourbon was appointed Lieutenant-General

of the Kingdom of France, and, greatly to the distress of his wife, allowed himself to be persuaded by the Cardinal de Lorraine and his brother, the Duc François de Guise, to revert to the Catholic faith. The bait they held out to him was the hand of the young Mary, Queen of Scots, widow of François II. Jeanne, of course, was, so they said, to be divorced as being a heretic. Dissension was at the same time stirred up between King Antoine of Navarre and his brother the Prince de Condé.

Antoine, quite contented with his pretty mistress of the Flying Squadron, did not seek a divorce from his wife, but determined instead to attempt her conversion. The home-truths which this fickle Prince now heard from the Queen of Navarre not only irritated him but filled him with shame. Although, as she was in France, of which Kingdom he was Lieutenant-General, he did not dare to arrest his wife, a Queen in her own right, openly, Antoine sought to do so secretly in his own appanage of Vendôme, to which he ordered her to repair, while leaving her nine-year-old son, the Prince de Béarn, in his hands, to be made into a Catholic.

Jeanne d'Albret was a great deal too clever a woman not to see through her husband's designs. Before leaving the French Court she admonished the youthful Henri, made him swear not to allow his faith to be tampered with, and vowed to repudiate him as her son, and to disinherit him, should he be persuaded to do so. Then, instead of proceeding to Vendôme, the Queen of Navarre took an entirely unexpected route, and, after having been very ill on the road, as the result of the shock caused by her husband's baseness, arrived in safety at Nérac, having taken with her Catherine, her little daughter, then three years of age. She never saw her husband

again, for Antoine de Bourbon, while fighting on the side opposed to his brother, was wounded while capturing the city of Rouen, which he had entered by the breach.

For three weeks the King of Navarre lingered here, attended by Mademoiselle du Rouet, with whom he was planning to lead a delightful future in a Kingdom which he proposed to establish in the Isle of Sardinia, when death tore him from her arms, at the age of forty-two. He reverted once more to the Huguenot faith in his last moments, and wrote a tender farewell to his wife, which contained many wise counsels which he would have done well to have observed himself.

A truce having taken place between the Huguenots and the Catholics, Jeanne d'Albret, who had been vigorously supporting the former, now returned to the French Court, to withdraw her son from that nest of iniquity presided over by the shameless Catherine de Médicis. Charles IX., not yet fourteen years of age, had succeeded his brother François II. on the throne. From this boy the Queen of Navarre obtained the permission she sought to take away the youthful Henri, and, knowing that Catherine de Médicis had not been consulted, hurried away with him at once to Béarn before the Queen-Mother had time to interfere.

No sooner had she returned to her Kingdom than this courageous Queen learned that Philip II. was about to hurl all the might of Spain against her, with the view of dragging her and her children before the Inquisition. Far from showing any fear, Jeanne visited in person all the fortresses of Béarn and put them in good repair, then repaired in person to a strong castle in Lower Navarre, where, with the ladies of her Court and her children, she prepared to stand a siege.

Jeanne's boldness saved her from a siege, but, at the instigation of Philip II., the Queen of Navarre was cited to appear before the Pope, to answer an accusation of heresy. Jeanne now threw herself upon the protection of Charles IX., whose vassal she was for the principality of Albret. Her liege lord did not desert her. Charles IX. wrote an angry letter to Pope Pius IX., asserting his rights as Suzerain over the dominions of Albret, and warning his Holiness to keep his hands off the Queen of Navarre, and also of some French Bishops in those domains who had been likewise summoned to Rome before the Inquisition. The Pope, even to please Spain, was not prepared to risk a war with France ; thus he drew in his horns and cancelled the summons, whereupon Jeanne left her fortified castle in Lower Navarre and returned to Nérac.

Here, while this excellent Queen personally superintended the education of her daughter, Catherine de Bourbon, she encouraged the bringing up of her son in the manner which had been recommended to her by her own sturdy father. This was after the fashion of a bold mountaineer. Henri was trained to climb the rocks bare-foot after wolf, chamois, or bear ; he was taught to learn to be frugal in his habits, and to do a long day's hard hunting without food. He was given a teacher of the Reformed religion, named La Gaucherie, who was encouraged to use, rather than to spare, the rod on the back of his royal pupil. In after-life Henri was wont to say that he had found nothing so profitable as being well thrashed, and recommended the same methods being followed with his son, afterwards Louis XIII.

It must be remembered that Jeanne d'Albret had

herself been frequently flogged in her childhood, for refusing to marry the Duke of Cleves, but without effect. Similarly, the thrashings so frequently administered to her young son seem, alas! to have been useless as a means of drumming into him any idea of morality.

CHAPTER III

Early Amours of "Le Béarnais"

THE youthful Henri, in addition to becoming a hardy hunter, was early trained in all warlike exercises. By the time that he had attained his fifteenth year there was no young noble in the Kingdom of Navarre with whom he was unable to contend, upon equal terms, in all the knightly exercises of fencing on foot with broadsword or small-sword, jousting with the lance on horseback, or tilting at the ring. Henri became a man before his time, and even at this early age became corrupted by the loose standard of morality of the day, which insisted that it was necessary for a gallant young Prince to provide himself with a mistress. Ah! if it had only been one! but had that been the case there would have been but little love-interest in the career of the Prince, who was known as the *vert galant monarque*, and whose long series of amorous adventures contained so much that was romantic.

In the long list of fifty-six mistresses of Henri IV., compiled from contemporary records by M. de Lescure in the middle of the last century—a list which that historian rightly says is incomplete—the eighth name is that of Fleurette.

This young girl is called by other writers Florette, and she is generally designated by them as being, not the

eighth, but the first object of the adoration of Henri de Navarre. She was the daughter of the head gardener of the Château de Nérac, was sprightly, with laughing dark eyes, and not more than a couple of years older than the Prince. By this demoiselle of Béarn, of plebeian origin, the precocious Henri became a father for the first time. What became of her, subsequently, or of the child that she bore to the future King of Navarre, and later of France, the records do not say. Even had the Prince of Béarn, afterwards so ready to publicly acknowledge his illegitimate offspring, and to ennoble them, been his own master, he would scarcely have dared to have indulged his pride in early parentage, so far as to legitimatise a child of such humble origin. Nor do we know what Queen Jeanne thought or said about the matter. She had, it is true, become by that time a rigid Calvinist, but she had been brought up in the giddy Court of her uncle, François I. Therefore, although we fortunately possess no proof of the damaging assertion, made by Henri III. to the King of Navarre, that his mother's good name had not always been above suspicion, we may deem it probable that she was not too severe with her son for this first youthful *fredaine*, to be followed shortly by many more.

The strongly fortified seaport of La Rochelle was, in those early days of the French religious wars, the main stronghold of the Huguenots. Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, the father of Queen Jeanne, had, in the year 1528, been appointed "Governor and Lieutenant of the King in Guyenne, and the Government of La Rochelle." This Royal appointment would seem to have descended to the Prince of Béarn, after the death of his father Antoine de Bourbon at Rouen in 1562; a

peace having then taken place, called the Peace of Amboise, by which Catherine de Médicis, Regent for her son Charles IX., had done all in her power to propitiate the Huguenot leaders. In order to captivate the gallant Louis, Prince de Condé, the uncle of the Prince of Béarn, the Queen-Mother gave in his honour, and to celebrate the peace, one of those famous fêtes in which she made use of the meretricious charms of her swarm of maids of honour. At this festival the Prince, and the rest of the nobles whom it was sought to seduce, found themselves waited upon by the fair damsels of the Flying Squadron attired in scanty raiment of diaphanous gauze, their hair falling loosely over their shoulders.

Louis de Condé was then so attracted by the scarcely veiled charms of Isabelle de Limeuil that he fell into the snare while he was detained in a kind of semi-captivity at the Court. Unfortunately Isabelle madly fell in love with Condé in turn; she therefore failed to win the Prince over to the Royal and Catholic cause, as Mademoiselle du Rouet had won his brother Antoine, and a short time later he was to be found, in company with the Admiral Gaspard de Coligny and other great nobles, both Protestant and Catholic, again in arms against the Crown. In the meantime Catherine de Médicis had proceeded to Bayonne, on the borders of Navarre, in order to escort her daughter Élizabeth to the frontiers of Spain, in which country she was to become the third wife of Philip II., after having been previously promised to that monarch's son, Don Carlos.[1]

During that visit Jeanne de Albret and her two

[1] Philip discovered later an intrigue between Élizabeth (called in Spain Isabella) and his son, to whom she had been affianced. When he became assured that the couple loved one another not wisely but too well, he caused his wife to be poisoned and his son killed in prison.

children had joined the French Court at Bayonne, when Catherine did her best to win them over to the Royalist side, and, doubtless with this intention, caused all of his father's and grandfather's honours in Guyenne and Rochelle to be confirmed to the young Prince of Navarre. The result of this appointment was that after Condé had been defeated at Jarnac in March 1569, and treacherously murdered by order of the Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henri III., when he had surrendered, young Henri de Navarre was taken by his mother to La Rochelle, and there they fixed their abode.

The energetic and determined Jeanne d'Albret made up her mind at once that, if her son was not too young to indulge in amorous encounters, neither was he too young to embark upon warlike exploits. With her own hand she fastened on his armour, invested him with his sword, lance, and dagger. Then she presented him to the inhabitants of Rochelle and to the troops as one who was to fight for the Huguenot cause. Before attaining the age of sixteen, with his young cousin Henri de Condé, "le Béarnais" was placed under the military direction of the Admiral de Coligny, and for two years he was almost continuously involved in battles, skirmishes, and sieges, during which time he was officially recognised as being the head of those of "the Religion."

After having been present at the battle of Moncontour, which was a terrible defeat, in which, however, neither he nor the young Condé was personally engaged, Henri had his first chance of distinguishing himself at Arnay-le-Duc. Here, after Coligny had been wounded, the two cousins took over the command, and with a small force violently overthrew the Royalists, both displaying not only gallantry but great military skill.

Catherine now persuaded her violent young son Charles IX. to grant a new peace to the heretics. It was signed at Saint-Germain in 1570, and most favourable to the Protestants. After this campaign the leaders of "the cause" returned to La Rochelle, and to the delights of love. The Admiral de Coligny took, as his second wife, the very rich and romantic Comtesse d'Entremont, and at the same time married his daughter, Louise de Châtillon, later Princess of Orange, to Charles de Téligny. Among the balls and fêtes which celebrated the conclusion of the peace at La Rochelle, Henri de Navarre, now a young and successful hero, was not long in discerning a very handsome face. It was that of a young married lady, wife of Pierre de Martines, an aged professor of Greek and Hebrew.

Suzanne des Moulins, the spouse of the instructor in an University for Protestants largely endowed by the Béarnais, Coligny, and Prince Henri de Condé, was a compatriot of Henri de Navarre, who was not quite eighteen when he first met her. She was born at Arguedas, in Navarre, but, beyond the fact of her being many years the Professor's junior at the time when she was first distinguished by what the contemporary writers call the Prince's "kindness," the young lady's age is unknown.

The warlike renown, the rank, and the good nature of one who was to become the King, soon won the heart and overcame the scruples of the fair Suzanne, and again, although Henri seems to have thrown no cloak over the liaison which soon took place between them, his strong-minded mother does not appear to have intervened to cause her son to behave with greater propriety.

The ministers of the Reformed religion at La Rochelle

did not view the matter with equal complacency—they did not scruple to call the Prince to book from the pulpit on account of his misconduct. Bassompierre says in his *Mémoires* : "Being in the springtime of his youth at La Rochelle, Henri IV. seduced a *bourgeoise* named the lady Martines, by whom he had a son, who died. The ministers and the consistory addressed public remonstrances to him in the Protestant meeting-house."

In spite of this public reprobation to which the Béarnais and his lightly conducted paramour were thus exposed, that the worthy Professor seems to have thought very little of the matter is evident from a further passage in the same *Mémoires* : "He did not even complain of the Prince's attentions, thinking that Madame Martinia and Henri did not go beyond the bounds of simple gallantry, and did not push the matter further than play."

Since we find it hard to believe that a man learned in so many matters as Pierre Martines de Morantin was incapable of perceiving that which was more notorious even than *le secret de Polichinelle*, it is more than probable that, like many another husband whose wife has been honoured by the "kindnesses" of Royalty, he found it more to his interest to pretend that he could not see that which the clergy declared to be an open scandal. He may even—and the thing is not unusual—have considered in the light of an honour the attentions to his young spouse of the Prince who had called him from Navarre to a lucrative position at Rochelle. Be that as it may, the Professor never treated Suzanne other than kindly, and when he died, twenty years later in 1591, expressed himself in most effusive terms in his will, and left her all his property.

For five years after the death of her son by Henri de Navarre the amiable Madame de Martines had no children. She then gave birth in rapid succession to two sons and two daughters, but, like the son of a Royal father, these all died in early infancy. During her married life after, save for an occasional meeting, Henri had passed out of it, Susanne would not seem to have been inconsolable.

According to *La Confession de Sancy*, that lively satire of, the faithful follower and historian of Henri IV., Agrippa d'Aubigné, this tender-hearted lady found place in her affections for other lovers when the Prince had become as openly inconstant as he had been openly devoted. Among these was a man of considerable note as an author, the Seigneur de Fay, the grandson of de l'Hôpital, the celebrated Chancellor of Catherine de Médicis.

Henri had upon his subsequent visits to La Rochelle various other tender love-passages with ladies of that Protestant city. Of his connection with Madame de Sponde, another Navarrese lady and wife of another classical scholar, who translated Homer and Hesiod, there is not much worthy of remark, save that d'Aubigné, who never loved the mistresses of the master whom he served so well, hated both the husband and wife, and abuses both alike.

Jean de Sponde evidently was one of those who profited by his wife's infidelities ; he was appointed to a very high position at La Rochelle, which he filled very badly, and wherein he caused great municipal confusion by his mismanagement.

A more entertaining love-affair of the *roi vert galant* in this maritime resort was one in which the father of

the lady concerned was neither as blind as the honest Professor de Martines nor as complaisant as Jean de Sponde. This parent showed, moreover, that he had a very pretty wit, by the talent with which he contrived to make such a reply to "le Béarnais" as to render it impossible for that dissolute Prince either to take offence at it or resent it.

Henri, now become King of Navarre, was in the habit of frequently visiting a very handsome young lady, the daughter of a Sheriff, and this pretty maid was not insensible to the prayers of the warrior Prince. The girl's father understood only too well how matters were between them, but the honest gentleman did not well see how he could contrive to put an end to his daughter's liaison with a personage of such exalted rank.

One day, however, entering suddenly into his daughter's apartment, he found the young lady sitting a little closer to her Sovereign than mere politeness seemed to require. The Sheriff instantly administered a stinging box on the ear to the girl, who cried out with pain and confusion.

"What are you doing that for?" angrily exclaimed the disconcerted King of Navarre.

"Sire, I strike my daughter because she is showing herself wanting in respect to your Majesty."

Henri had to put up with this reply; he found nothing to say. After this he ceased to frequent the Sheriff's house, and commenced to pay his attentions to the young lady spoken of usually as Esther Imbert.

CHAPTER IV

Henri de Navarre and Esther

THERE have been various relations of the affair of Henri with the fair Esther of La Rochelle, and most of these, even that given by the talented historian Michelet, are somewhat misleading, especially in regard to her parentage, her birthplace, and her fate. Upon one point authorities disagree, which is the statement that she was the sufferer by the neglect of the volatile Prince ; but while some, Michelet among the number, say that he basely deserted her after having made of her but the plaything of an hour, and rendered her a mother, there is evidence to prove that such was by no means the case.

It is to the researches of a learned gentleman of La Rochelle, named Jourdan, and the paper which he read before La Sorbonne in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century, that the correct details of the history of this Rochelaise demoiselle and the way she was treated by the Béarnais have at length become known.

"Strange be the ways of a man with a maid" was written long before the days of Henri de Navarre, and it must be confessed that to none did the adage apply more than to this descendant from two separate Royal lines. It is, however, always gratifying to the admirer of this gallant Prince to find some redeeming trait in his method of behaviour to the fair creature by whom his

passions are stirred for the time being, to see some evidences of real affection and generosity—not merely those of base and brutal neglect following immediately upon possession, as some would have us believe.

As a matter of fact, those who consider carefully his methods with women will observe that not only was Henri's nature remarkably inflammable, but that propinquity always begot in him a continuous and constantly increasing violence of affection—for a time. In these cases his desire to gratify his lady-love and to secure her future welfare was ever great—so great indeed that he frequently wanted to marry his mistresses, but was fortunately prevented from so doing, either by the remonstrances of d'Aubigné or the fact of his having a wife already, from whom it was not easy to procure a divorce. While this absorbing interest continued Henri was always generous to the object of his attentions.

There were, of course, many happy-go-lucky and fleeting amours in Henri's life: stray meetings, chance kisses, a night's hospitality here or there, of which no record ever remained, either on the heart of the Prince or on his Treasurer's balance-sheets. That among these cannot be included the affair with Esther de Boyslambert has now been indubitably proved, even if in the end the unhappy young lady was allowed, as it would appear, to perish miserably in actual want or by poison.

We left "le Béarnais" at La Rochelle, highly disconcerted by the brusque methods of the father of his last lady-love, and mentioned how the excess of jealousy shown on behalf of the Royal prerogative and of majesty by the super-loyal Sheriff had determined His Majesty of Navarre to seek for fresh fields and pastures new. The proof of this is to be found in the contemporary

annals known as the *Recherches Curieuses*, in which the chronicler tells us that: "The King of Navarre, whose temperament was inclined to love, never discontinued, in the midst of his most important affairs, to run after ladies, and to have all the adventures with them that he could. This Prince, then, had in this same town an intrigue with Mademoiselle de Boyslambert, who, becoming enceinte by the King, gave birth to a son, on August 7th, 1587, at four o'clock in the morning."

This young lady, called by some chroniclers merely Esther, by others Ester Imbert, or Ymbert, was the daughter of Jacques Ymbert, Seigneur de Boyslambert, a gentleman whom Michelet merely designates as "an honourable Protestant Magistrate of La Rochelle."

He was, however, a man of property, and held various other appointments. His wife was Catherine Rousseau, and Esther, the eldest of their ten children, was baptized in the Protestant church of La Rochelle on January 5th, 1565. This was the same year in which some wrongly place the birth of the celebrated Gabrielle d'Estrées, who was to become Esther's successful rival. As the King of Navarre won this young lady to his will in 1586, Esther was twenty-one years of age when she became his mistress. As for her father having been "an honourable magistrate," it would appear rather as if he had trafficked in his daughter's shame with the King of Navarre (as did subsequently the father of Henriette d'Entragues, Marquise de Verneuil). For we find Jacques Ymbert de Boyslambert about this time becoming Bailly of the Grand Fief of Aunis, and, a little later, receiving from the Prince who had seduced his daughter the high appointment of "Counsellor and Master of Requests of the

House of Navarre." These facts do not seem to speak very highly of the father's honour, and the presumption is that he deliberately sacrificed that of his innocent daughter to the whim of a debauched young Monarch, then thirty-three years of age.

That, instead of at once treating Esther with neglect, this young King endowed Esther with a pension is apparent from two documents still in existence, both headed "De Par le Roy De Navarre," signed "Henry," and counter-signed by "Duplessis-Mornay, by the very express command of His Majesty."

These provide for the payment, quarterly in advance, of the sum of two thousand crowns, *sols*, valued at six thousand livres, *tournois*. They are dated at La Rochelle October 13th and 14th, 1587. There is also still present in the archives of the Basses-Pyrénées the first receipt signed by Esther for her quarter's allowance, while four other receipts, given by her to the Treasurer-General of the King of Navarre, remain as further testimony to contradict the crude statement of d'Aubigné, followed by others, that Henri allowed the infant son of Esther Ymbert to die in poverty, of starvation.

To give the devil his due, we have only to refer to one of the above documents, signed "Henry," and countersigned "Duplessis-Mornay," by *the very express command of His Majesty*. That noble Calvinist gentleman, Philippe de Mornay, Seigneur of Le Plessis-Marly, was as celebrated for his exploits with his sword as for his statesmanship and readiness with his pen, and a noted French writer has said: "If virtue ever had home upon earth it was in the heart of Mornay."

One of the two documents which Henri compelled this honest counsellor to countersign, as an evidence

of his own good faith, had in a great measure to deal with the provision for this infant son of the King of Navarre, who is therein endowed with a regular household of his own, and spoken of as *Monsieur*, the title habitually used by the eldest brother of the King of France. It may be noted here that Henri, when he had become King of France, called his eldest son by Gabrielle d'Estrées, who was César, Duc de Vendôme, by this title of "Monsieur."

The paper in question is headed as follows :

"State of the suite and expense that the King of Navarre has ordered to Monsieur (Gédéon), his natural son, and to the Damoiselle Ester Imbert."

Then follows a list of an establishment, consisting of a governess named Jehanne Decourt, a nurse, a *fille de chambre*, two servants, la Chapelle, the King's *Varlet de chambre*, and an apothecary of His said Majesty, named Desbonshommes. Opposite the name of each is noted the sum appointed for their payment, and an allowance of two thousand crowns yearly is appointed to the said Damoiselle wherewith to defray the living expenses of this suite provided for her little son, Gédéon.

The name of the nurse was Marguerite Berthelot, and when the child Gédéon died, just as he was beginning to speak, at the end of 1588, an allowance was made to this nurse, by express command of the King, of twenty-five crowns, "in consideration of the services which she had given to the said late Sieur Gédéon during his lifetime. This fact is attested by the nurse's receipt in the accounts for 1589 of the Treasurer-General of Navarre, rendered up to the time of Henri's accession to the throne of France, later on in that same year. The receipt was signed by nurse Berthelot upon the 6th day of February. When

Henri de Navarre was residing at La Rochelle between his campaigns he was in the habit of hiring, at a very high price, a palace known as the Hôtel d'Huré, and in this, according to M. Jourdan, he lived openly with the daughter of Jean de Boyslambert, whose little son, with his establishment, was installed under the same roof. At this same period the King of Navarre and Prince de Béarn, as Henri then styles himself in a manifesto, was indulging in his well-known love affair with the Comtesse de Gramont, known as *La belle Corisande.* To her he wrote : " Believe me that my fidelity is white and spotless ; there was never any like it. If that gives you contentment, live happy."

It seems almost impossible that Corisande, or, to give her the name of her maidenhood, Diane d'Andouins, can have believed these protestations, so often repeated, or have been ignorant of her Royal lover's unconcealed liaison with Esther Imbert. Indeed, it was probably from her knowledge of the worthlessness of the protestations of this Prince, for whom she had displayed so much devotion, that Corisande commenced those letters questioning his fidelity which gave Henri so much umbrage, and eventually caused the rupture between them. If anything were needed to open her eyes, it must certainly have been supplied when, at the end of 1588, Henri wrote to Corisande to ask for her sympathy upon the death of his son. " I am greatly afflicted by the death of my little one, who died yesterday. He was just beginning to talk." He can surely have then cared but little for the feelings of the Comtesse de Gramont, or he would scarcely have selected her as his confidante on the subject of the loss of his child by the rival whom she must already have looked upon with jealous eyes.

So strange has this letter appeared in the eyes of the historians that even Voltaire, in his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, gives it as his opinion that it must have been a child of Corisande herself that died at La Rochelle—to which place, however, she is known never to have gone. M. Jourdan has, however, cleared up the matter since the days of Voltaire, and there can, therefore, be now no further doubt of the fact that it was the child of Esther who then died, aged fifteen months and twenty-two days. At that age the little boy might well be commencing to babble his earliest words, which were also to be his last.

In April 1589, after the death of Catherine de Médicis, Duplessis-Mornay, by his wise counsels, brought about first a truce and then the famous reconciliation between the King of Navarre and his brother-in-law, Henri III., which took place at Plessis-les-Tours. It would seem as if both Esther and her father quitted La Rochelle at this time, in order to follow that young lady's Royal lover. A note in the accounts of the Receiver-General of Navarre for that year shows a payment "to the Damoiselle Esther Imbert, by the express command of the said Lord King, of 200 crowns, for the expenses of herself and her suite, and for the purchase of necessaries for the journey she was then making."

This payment was made in April; Esther, therefore, doubtless followed the King, in whose suite was also at that time a young gentleman of the name of Ymbert, in all probability one of her brothers. In August of that year the assassination of Henri III. by Jacques Clément carried the King of Navarre to the throne of France. From the above, however, it is evident that, up to the date of his accession, Henri still continued his liberalities to the mother of his son Gédéon. Thus, up to this

period, d'Aubigné has proved unjust to Henri in the *Confession de Sancy*. After Henri's accession, however, what was the fate of this young lady with whom the King had lived on such terms of tender intimacy for the past three years ? She was now twenty-four years of age, and, although the chroniclers differ as to the mode of her death, all alike place it three years later, in 1592 ; but all do not attribute it directly or indirectly to the neglect of her Royal lover. Henri was now continually fighting for his life and throne against the Guise faction and the powerful organisation of the League.

In 1592 the King had neither been crowned nor yet been able to effect an entrance into Paris, which he had been long besieging, but which remained in the occupation of the Leaguers and the Spaniards. He had established his headquarters at Saint-Denis when, according to Michelet, the unhappy Esther, " who had been unable to get married and who had, in addition, been ruined by the war, came to that place a suppliant—only asking for bread." The historian adds that, for fear of encountering the coldness of Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henri refused bread to Esther, and that she died of poverty and sorrow at Saint-Denis.

D'Aubigné's story differs from the above—he makes Esther's father die of hunger at Saint-Denis, whither he had been in vain to beg for his daughter's pension—but he adds that Esther died of her privations shortly after Jean de Boyslambert.

Two other writers say that Esther died of poison administered by the King's new mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, when Esther was about to follow Henri IV. into Burgundy. They place her death on July 14th, 1592. These authors are Colin and Bergier.

Jaillot, the author of the *Recherches Curieuses*, is no less explicit on the subject of the poisoning of Esther by Gabrielle, who, it will be remembered, eventually died of poison herself. He says that it was while on the journey to Burgundy that this unhappy young lady succumbed to the poison which had been administered by the orders of Gabrielle, "who was commencing to share with her the good graces of his Majesty."

How can we tell which is the truth? One point, however, is patent. This is that Gabrielle was commencing to share the King's favours with Esther Imbert. This latter had hitherto remained in favour, and Henri IV. has been unjustly accused of early ingratitude and inhumanity to one who merited nothing but love and kindness at his hands.

CHAPTER V

The Corrupt Court of Catherine

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS was the youngest surviving daughter of Henri II. and Catherine de Médicis, a Queen who, after ten years of sterility, from 1533 to 1543, presented her husband with ten children in rapid succession. During the ten years preceding the birth of Catherine's son, who was subsequently François II., husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, Henri II. would appear to have lived exclusively with his elderly but beautiful mistress, Diane de Poitiers. This handsome widow, who had already been the favourite of François I., Henri's father, was the mother of a daughter by Henri II. It was, however, when she had at length recognised the necessity of there being legitimate heirs to the throne of France that Diane ordered, as some say, or permitted according to others, Henri to live *maritalement* with his wife. Five boys and five girls were then born of the union. Of these, four sons survived, and three of them, François II., Charles IX., and Henri III., reigned in succession. Three girls lived : Élizabeth, married to Philip II. of Spain, Claude, married to the reigning Duke Charles III. of Lorraine, and Marguerite, who in 1572 became the wife of Henri de Navarre. This last-named was born at Fontainebleau on May 14th, 1553, seven months before Henri de

Navarre, who was born on December 14th, 1553. Thus she was six years old when her father, Henri II., was accidentally killed in a tournament, in June 1559, by Montgomery, the captain of his Scottish Guard.

From this early date until Marguerite, having grown up, came to live entirely under her mother's domination, she does not tell us much about herself in her famous *Mémoires*. In these records of her life, which are addressed to Brantôme, who had written her praises, Marguerite takes care only to mention such circumstances as suit her, and to give just the colour which she chooses to her actions. Although incomplete, being carried only to the year 1582, they are exceedingly interesting, and might, moreover, almost have been written by a prude. In spite, however, of her wilful concealment of facts concerning herself, the fair author of the memoirs cannot help letting in the light upon her real feelings at times, no matter how ambiguously she may talk as a rule. Such, for instance, is the case with reference to two of the most famous of her lovers, the Duc Henri de Guise and Bussy d'Amboise, her excessive admiration for whom cannot but become apparent, in spite of the studied concealment of the facts of her connection with each of them in turn.

There are, however, a mass of other records in existence, from which all, or almost all, the details of the life of the fair but frail Marguerite have become known, and to these her diary, commencing at the time when she "was of the suite of the Queen, her mother, to stir from it no more," forms a most valuable corollary.

From the Italian woman, her mother, who only emancipated herself from the rule of Diane de Poitiers upon her husband's death, Marguerite never learned any-



MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, AS A CHILD
(Attributed to F. Clouet, 1557)

thing that was good. Of this Florentine Princess Châteaubriand has said: "Daughter of a family of merchants raised to the Principality in a Republic, she was accustomed to popular storms, to factions, to intrigues, to poisonings, to dagger-thrusts. . . . She was unbelieving and superstitious, like the Italians of her day. She had not, in her quality of unbeliever, the slightest dislike for the Protestants; she simply had them massacred from policy."

With Catherine a quantity of Italians had come to the Court of France, where their vices and debaucheries became the fashion, as also their habits of assassination and poisoning. Above all, with them came the belief in astrology, occult and magic practices. The habit of poisoning with perfumes or a pair of gloves, and the study of alchemy also came to France from Italy.

Catherine was a firm believer in astrology and sorcery, and, with the aid of her perfumer, the Florentine René, she was credited by the people of her day with many a secret, deadly crime, one of which was the murder of Jeanne d'Albret with a pair of poisoned gloves, in July 1572.

With a mother who looked upon assassination merely as a method of government, and at a time when the Royal family, and even the powerful family of Guise, kept assassins at their beck and call like servants, Marguerite could scarcely be expected to grow up very scrupulous where human life was concerned. She, however, took but slightly after her mother in this respect. The mother was said to be cold and disinclined to gallantry, the only liaison with which Catherine was credited being one with the Cardinal de Lorraine, brother of Duc François de Guise. Very dissimilar here was the nature of the daughter, Marguerite having been by

far the most warm-blooded Princess that ever sprung from the race of Valois, or indeed from any other Royal race of France.

The influence of Catherine de Médicis was not such, however, as to check but rather to promote the immorality of the women of her Court, of many of whom she made use for her own purposes of seduction. Her maids were chosen at about the age of fourteen, and only those young ladies selected who already possessed a considerable share of beauty, with promise of more. The pamphleteers of the day say that these girls were "methodically instructed in habits of gallantry," while the Queen shut her eyes upon the most shameless licence. Brantôme again says of these maids of honour that "they had free choice to be as much the devotees of Venus as of Diana ; the only thing that was expected of them was to be clever enough to avoid getting themselves into trouble." The worthy Seigneur de Bourdeille certainly expresses this fact in a little blunter language, but that he speaks the truth is proved by the anger expressed by Catherine de Médicis when her daughter's maid of honour, Fosseuse, gave birth to a child of which the King of Navarre was the father. In a letter to her son-in-law on this subject, the only disgraceful part of the matter seems to be, to Catherine, the fact that a child should have been born and the fact have been allowed to become publicly known. Be thou not found out ! was the adage which Catherine believed in and instilled into her maidens.

It was, then, in the midst of a depraved Court, one where the life of a man was of as little value as the honour of a woman, that not only Marguerite, but Mary, Queen of Scots, and Gabrielle d'Estrées, were brought up.

Who could blame these three women if they became infected with the rottenness which surrounded them from their early years? The rottenness of the Court of Catherine de Médicis when her son Charles IX. was on the throne was such, indeed, as to horrify Queen Jeanne d'Albret, a Princess who most certainly had seen enough about Courts in the days of her uncle François I. not to be too easily shocked.

"No!" she exclaims, in a letter dated March 8th, 1572, and addressed to her son, "great as I conceived the corruption of the Court, it exceeds the idea that I had formed of it. There the men do not solicit the women; it is the women who solicit the men."

It would indeed appear as if Catherine de Médicis had done her utmost to imbue her sons with her own depravation, to render them heartless and unscrupulous. In order to close their hearts to all feelings of pity, she was even in the habit of witnessing all executions, surrounded by her ladies and her children.

The memoirs of the Duc de Bouillon bear out the assertion of Jeanne d'Albret concerning the immoral depravity of the Court in the time of Catherine de Médicis and her sons. He wrote in 1568, coldly, and as if merely asserting a known fact: "The women chose those by whom they would be served; the parents chose the mistresses of their sons."

It was to a Florentine named Gondi, Duc de Retz, that the education of her sons was confided by the Queen-mother, and he was a man of the very worst reputation. In order to endow this Italian with the property of Versailles, she caused its owner, Loménie, the King's secretary, to be strangled in the State prison. Under Retz, Charles IX. and his brothers, Henri, Duc d'Anjou,

and François, Duc d'Alençon, had the very worst kind of training. These youths were encouraged to select their mistresses from among the voluptuous attendants of the Queen. Of these, Marie Touchet became by Charles IX. the mother of the Comte d'Auvergne, afterwards Duc d'Angoulême, and a sharp thorn in the side of Henri IV., who had taken Henriette d'Entragues, the half-sister of Angoulême, as one of his last mistresses. Henri d'Anjou, later to become Henri III., lived openly with Renée de Rieux, a woman of the lightest character who went by the name of "la belle Châteauneuf," while half a dozen other young ladies of the Court fought among themselves over the possession of François, Duc d'Alençon, a Prince who was for long the apparently favoured suitor of Queen Elizabeth of England, although she was double his age.

Of these sons, François II., sickly from his birth, the husband of Mary of Scotland, died in youth, to be succeeded by his brother, Charles IX., who was only a mere boy of fourteen when, four years after his accession, he was declared of age. This youth was not without good impulses, but the fact that he was unable to escape from his mother's domination warped his nature and rendered him excessively violent. He indulged habitually in the most terrible rages, mixed up his language with vile oaths, and continually engaged himself in tiring manual exercises, or in wild hunting parties, during which he blew his hunting-horn with such furious energy that he caused his lungs irreparable damage. These were but the ways in which Charles IX. endeavoured to blow off steam, to give vent to the rage caused by the difficulties of his reign, the attempted domination of the Guises, and the religious disputes of the Catholics and the Huguenots.

What angered Charles IX. above all were the constant jealousies, shown both of himself and one another, of his brothers of Anjou and Alençon.

It was by adroitly working upon all the distracted furies of this wildly discontented and suspicious young King that Catherine de Médicis and the Duc d'Anjou eventually wrung from him the order for the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew in August 1572—an order the recollection of which caused him agonies of remorse when he died, aged twenty-four.

Far worse than Charles IX. was his brother Henri, the Prince favoured by his mother, who sought to make use of him in her constant projects against his elder brother. After his accession to the throne he habitually dressed himself more like a woman than a man, wore earrings and necklaces, and indulged in shameless debauches with young companions as vile as himself, who went popularly by the name of the King's *mignons*, or darlings. Henri d'Anjou was a man absolutely without conscience, who delighted in doing evil; and Charles IX., so long as he lived, never sought to conceal the disgust and disdain caused him by his brother Henri, of whom he said that he "did well to hide his vices, as he had no virtues to set off against them."

François, Duc d'Alençon, the youngest of the brothers, died before Henri III., and thus, fortunately for France, never succeeded to the throne left by that childless monarch to Henri de Navarre. Of this scheming and ambitious Prince there is little to be said but that he was a mass of duplicity and indecision.

Constantly plotting against the effeminate Henri III., d'Alençon was for a long time in arms, at the head of the party called the *Politiques*, or moderate Catholics

allied to his Bourbon cousin, Henri de Navarre and the Huguenots. No sooner, however, had he won certain advantages, in the shape of an appanage and money for himself, than he deserted the Protestant cause and gladly took command for his brother Henri III. against his former partisans.

Later on we again find d'Alençon reconciled to the King of Navarre, the link between the pair being, as it had been in the first instance, Marguerite, the sister of one and wife of the other. The affection of François for this sister, which was returned by her with equal force, was the most sincere and durable affection of which this unreliable Prince ever showed himself capable. Unfortunately its nature was such as should not have existed between brother and sister. Although Marguerite has been accused by her enemies of having been on terms of impropriety also with both Charles IX. and Henri III., there is absolutely no proof where the former of these was concerned, and the story may be set down as a malicious lie, if for no other reason because, with all his faults, Charles had something too manly and honest in his nature for such a thing to have been possible.

As for the Duc d'Anjou, his nature was so utterly despicable that anything could have been believed of him. The furious persecution to which he subsequently subjected Marguerite, and the vile, if true, accusations which he openly made against her, would seem to give colour to the report that he hated his sister with the hatred of a jealous lover furious at finding himself constantly deceived.

We may mention that neither the Duc d'Anjou nor the Duc d'Alençon bore in earlier life the name by which he was subsequently known, the former having been

baptized as Alexandre and the latter as Hercule. Having been told by the astrologer Nostradamus that she would live to see all her sons Kings in succession, and that there would be no heir to the Valois, Catherine imagined that she could cheat the action of the planets in their courses by changing the names of the two younger Princes at their confirmation. The prophecy proved, however, correct, with the exception that, instead of a King, d'Alençon became, by the election of the people, the absolute ruler of the Low Countries. François was greatly indebted to the wiles and meretricious smiles of his sister, which brought the Governors of cities and provinces to her feet, in attaining his ends in this matter of his ambition.

According to the *Divorce Satyrique*, a pamphlet in which the author makes Henri IV. in his own name attempt to avenge his conjugal misfortunes by revealing his wife's infidelities, Marguerite was from a very tender age one of the most corrupt damsels in a thoroughly corrupt Court. By all historical writers since the days of Henri de Navarre, the greater part of the statements in this pamphlet have been considered to have been founded on absolute fact. The *Divorce Satyrique* credits the precocious Princess with two lovers, named respectively Charrins and d'Entragues, before she had completed her twelfth year. The latter of these taking a wife, and Charrins having been given his *congé*, they were succeeded in the young lady's graces by the Prince de Martigues, whose intrigue with the juvenile Princess was not only an open secret at the Court but the jest of the army, in which the Prince held the rank of Colonel, owing to the fact of his openly wearing an embroidered scarf which Marguerite had given to him.

CHAPTER VI

The Marriage and what Followed

August 1572

In 1572 Charles IX. and his mother, Catherine de Médicis, determined upon arranging a marriage between the sister whom the King called *sa grosse Margot* and "le Béarnais." It is probable that Charles, who was at that time on intimate, indeed affectionate, terms with the Admiral de Coligny, of whose military skill he sought to make use in Flanders, had no evil designs in bringing about this match, one, however, much dreaded and resisted by Jeanne d'Albret.

Catherine, on the other hand, jealous of the Admiral's growing influence over the King, and in all probability in league from the beginning with the young Duc Henri of Guise, who had sworn Coligny's death, deliberately sought to make of her daughter the bait for the trap in which she would catch all of the leading Huguenots at one fell swoop. This would be an easy matter should those of "the religion" follow Henri de Navarre and his cousin, the Prince de Condé, to Paris for the wedding.

Jeanne d'Albret, having come to Paris to bargain over the terms of the proposed marriage, wrote to her son, Henri de Navarre, concerning Marguerite. Full

of alarms for the future, with a prophetic instinct Jeanne begged her son, once he should be married, to hurry off at once with his bride to his ancestral home in Béarn; at all events, not to delay in the pestilential air of the Parisian Court. She said of Marguerite, "She is beautiful and well-informed, and of goodly learning, but has been nourished in the most accursed and corrupted society that ever existed. For I do not see one that is not tainted by it. I would not, for anything in the world, have you come here to remain in it. . . . Great as I believed the corruption to be, I find it still worse."

Tainted by it indeed was Marguerite, and at this very time deeply in love with the Duc Henri de Guise, who had at an early date supplanted all the other lovers of her youth in her good graces.

The Guises, of the Ducal family of Lorraine, then an independent country, were Princes closely connected with the Royal family of France, to the throne of which country they further aspired, on the grounds of the direct descent which they claimed from the Emperor Charlemagne. Henri de Guise was young, bold, handsome, and warlike, and the first cousin of Mary, Queen of Scots. Of all the early lovers of Marguerite de Valois, he is the one of whose close relations with her no doubt has ever existed in the minds of the chroniclers and historians. While she loved him passionately, he returned her love with an ardent and fiery passion, which was not, moreover, devoid of ambition, since, as she grew up, he sought to make of her at the same time his bride and the stepping-stone to the throne of the Valois.

It was with the view of checking the plainly evident

aspirations of this Prince, in whose constant plottings and ambitions a permanent danger was visible, that Charles IX. and his mother had determined to marry Marguerite to Henri, a Bourbon, and as such the natural enemy of that Guise faction which was so greatly to be dreaded by the State.

Although Catherine was frequently to be found plotting with the members of the family of Guise, often against her own sons, in order to secure her own paramount authority, she was just as often at the same time contriving subtle schemes by which their enemies might thwart their desires ; and in this manner she contrived to preserve the balance of power, and to prevent the Lorraine family from becoming omnipotent.

This they had nearly become, however, during the short reign of François II. Then, as the uncles of the Scottish Mary, François, Duc de Guise, who was father of the Duc Henri, and the Cardinal de Lorraine, Henri's uncle, had dictated to Catherine de Médicis and carried matters at Court with a very high hand indeed.

Since the death of that ardent Catholic, François de Guise, assassinated, as many averred, at the instigation of, the Huguenot leader, the Admiral de Coligny, the hatred of his son, the young Duc Henri, against all of the Protestant faction had become more than ever intense. To marry a daughter of France—and one, moreover, whom Guise dearly loved—to the Protestant Prince de Béarn was to prevent any possibility of the feud being healed, or of any possible combination of the Bourbons and the Guises against the ruling family of Valois.

By his intrigues, and by working through his uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine, Henri de Guise had recently



GASPARD DE COLIGNY, SEIGNEUR DE CHATILLON
Amiral de France

contrived to upset a plan which had been formed for giving Marguerite in marriage to the young King of Portugal. Both Charles IX. and his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, were determined, however, that Guise should not profit by the breaking off of this match to obtain their sister's hand for himself. The King and his brother not only threatened to kill Guise with their own hand unless he renounced his intentions, but the former furiously ordered the Duc to leave the Court, and, if he valued his life, not to reappear unless he brought a wife with him.

Marguerite, who was constantly subjected to the taunts of her brother of Anjou, also begged her lover to get married, if only for her sake and to save her from persecution.

Guise wisely listened to Marguerite's supplications; he instantly married his mistress, Catherine de Clèves, Princesse de Porcien, the widow of one of the great nobles of the Burgundian family of Croy. Then he returned to the Court, and resumed his old relations with the Princess Marguerite, and their intimacy was then so public that many people believed that Guise had contracted a secret marriage with the Royal Princess before pretending to contract an union with another spouse. Dupleix, in his *Histoire de Louis XIII.*, says that "at the time of her marriage to Henri de Navarre Marguerite had from her early youth already so deeply fixed her affections upon Henri, Duc de Guise, that she never loved the King of Navarre, whom she had been made to hate in advance and at last to marry, in spite of herself, and against the canonical laws (concerning degrees of relationship). She said that she had been sacrificed for the sake of the public peace."

Vanel, in his *Galanteries des Rois de France*, goes even deeper than Dupleix into the romantic details of the amours of the Duc de Guise and Marguerite; the circumstances of their meetings and their partings, the letters that they wrote to one another, are all set forth by him without neglecting one interesting point. So great indeed is the wealth of detail that it is impossible not to imagine a little unnecessary embroidery in the pattern of the picture. Vanel, however, was probably speaking the unvarnished truth when he said: "Of all the lovers that the Queen Marguerite had, the Duc was the one that she loved most tenderly. The attachments that she formed elsewhere by no means extinguished the passion which she had for him. She kept her heart for him while he lived. . . ."

What one cannot, however, accept as gospel truth, is the manner in which Vanel continues the above sentence: "and when he was assassinated at Blois, they say that she went there two days in advance, disguised as a postillion, to warn him of what was being prepared for him; but this unfortunate Prince paid no attention to this advice, any more than that of several others given to him on the eve of his death."

Considering that Marguerite was, at the time of the assassination of Guise by Henri III., maintaining herself in a state of permanent armed defence at Usson, in Auvergne, against both her brother and her husband, this romantic story is evidently unworthy of credence. Another thing to militate against its probability is that during his last days on earth the magnificent Guise was living with a woman whom Marguerite hated and detested. This was Madame de Noirmoutier, who, as the famous Madame de Sauve, had previously caused

the Queen of Navarre enough trouble and cause for jealousy, with both her husband and her brother d'Alençon, to make it very unlikely that she would go near Guise when he too had succumbed to this lascivious siren. Above all, we cannot believe that Marguerite, much as she had formerly loved Guise, would have risked her still pretty head at the Castle of Blois. There her brother, Henri III., would have been only too ready to have his detested sister decapitated as a wanton and shameless woman, or certainly as a rebel, who had joined The Holy League against his authority, that League of which Henri de Guise was the originator, and on account of the power to which he had raised it was about to be assassinated.

Henri de Guise, the future chief of the League, had been compelled to sacrifice his views and wishes in an undesired marriage, two years before Marguerite de Valois was called upon to do the same thing. This future idol of Paris, and King of the Barricades, found it necessary to bow his proud head to some very disgraceful actions in order to maintain it in security in the Court, to which he had returned after his marriage, solely to be near the beautiful Princess Marguerite.

No person there hated Guise more than the treacherous, deceitful Duc d'Anjou, who, however, made a practice of treating the lover of the Princess to a system of cat-like caresses, which deceived neither Guise nor Marguerite, a fact which readers of the latter's memoirs will see that she does not forget to place on record.

In order to placate the dangerous Anjou, the splendid Duc Henri was compelled to resort to the despicable rôle of go-between. By his good offices Guise procured for the violently enamoured Duc d'Anjou the hitherto

refused favours of his pretty young sister-in-law, Marie de Clèves, Princesse de Condé. This young lady was fated to die very young, when the gallant Prince Henri de Condé was equally unfortunate, indeed, more so, in his second wife. This was Charlotte de la Trémouille, who was not only unfaithful to her husband but poisoned him in 1588, with the aid of her lover, a Gascon page, by whom she became the mother of a son, only eventually recognised as legitimate, owing to the good nature of Henri IV., who also took the mother from the prison in which she had been lying under sentence of death.

Owing to his good offices with the Duc d'Anjou, Henri de Guise had found it possible to remain in security at the Court for the space of two years which separated his own marriage from that of Marguerite to Henri de Bourbon.

This took place on August 17th, 1572, and the Béarnais, by the recent death of his mother, said to have been poisoned by Catherine de Médicis, had become King of Navarre about two months before the celebration of his nuptials with Marguerite de Valois. He came to Paris for the wedding, followed by a magnificent train of eight hundred Huguenot nobles attired in mourning, a dress which was changed, however, for the most splendid attire on the day of the wedding.

The story is always told of Marguerite, such was her unwillingness to marry Henri, that she refused to answer the fateful "Yes" during the ceremony, whereupon the fiery young Charles IX. furiously pushed down his sister's head. This action was taken as a consent by Henri's uncle, the Cardinal de Bourbon, who was performing the nuptial service.

In her own agreeably written memoirs, Marguerite

makes no mention of any such unwillingness on her part. On the contrary, this Princess of supple character, one who so frequently showed that she knew how to yield at the proper moment, dwells with considerable self-complacency upon the pomp and magnificence of her nuptials: "more than those of any one else of my degree."

Nor, when Henri was previously proposed to her by her mother, does she, according to her own record of what then took place, mention any disinclination to become the Queen of Navarre; all that she does is to mention mildly, when this Protestant Prince is proposed to her, that she herself is a good Catholic:

"Afterwards the Queen called me to her private apartments, and told me that Messieurs de Montmorency had proposed this marriage to her, and that she desired to know my wishes; to which I replied that I had neither will nor choice except her own, only I begged her to remember that I was very Catholic."

After the description of her wedding, Marguerite follows with a remark which would not lead us to believe that she had any regret for her marriage at the time of its consummation: "But fortune, which never leaves complete happiness to human beings, soon changed this happy condition of nuptials and triumph to one entirely the opposite."

The marriage took place, as we have mentioned, on August 17th, 1572, and Marguerite refers here to the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, five days later, when the Admiral de Coligny, his son-in-law, Charles de Téligny, and nearly all the Protestant nobles who had followed the King of Navarre to Paris, were, with thousands of others, butchered in cold blood by Charles IX., at the

instigations of Catherine de Médicis and the Duc d'Anjou.

Mongez, in his *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois*, tells us that this massacre had been designed to take place earlier than when it did, on August 24th, during the grand festivities on the 19th and 20th of the month. He shows that the large body of Huguenots had been simply drawn to Paris for the wedding in order that they might be butchered."

The first idea proposed was to kill them during a tourney, and a wooden fort was built for that purpose on an island in the Seine, "upon which rests a portion of the Pont-Neuf." This fort was to be garrisoned by the Duc d'Anjou and a picked band, who were to be attacked in sport by the King of Navarre, the Admiral, and the Huguenots. In the course of the playful mêlée, these latter were to be attacked in earnest by the defenders of the fort and all killed, and it was proposed to throw the odium of this infamous action upon a supposed quarrel between those taking part in the sham fight, which quarrel could not be stopped. "These cowardly and bloody actions," says the historian, "were much to the taste of Charles IX., who had got up one almost similar against the Duc de Guise, who was clever enough to avoid it ; but the assassination of Ligneroles, a favourite of 'Monsieur,' carried out with great precision according to his orders, filled him with joy."

This Ligneroles had foolishly allowed the King to see that he knew what it was proposed to do at the attack upon the fort upon the island ; but, after his death, as it seemed probable that the suspicions of the Huguenots might have been aroused, the fort was destroyed by



THE QUEEN OF NAVARRE (1572)
Marguerite de Valois, Daughter of Henri II. and Catherine de Médicis
(*Portrait in the Bibliothèque Nationale*)

the orders of Charles IX., and nothing said about the proposed sham fight on the river.

During the fêtes which took place religious feeling was plainly shown against the Huguenots. First, in that at the Hôtel de Bourbon the King, his brothers, and followers, defended a Paradise full of nymphs, and threw down into a hell, full of devils and sulphur, the King of Navarre and some Knights-errant, for asking admission to the abode of bliss. Then, in a tourney, the King and his brothers, with Guise and his brothers, were confronted by Henri de Navarre and Huguenot nobles who were compelled to be dressed in the unpopular attire of Turks. All these slights caused an uneasy feeling among the Huguenots and the Politiques, or moderate Catholics. The Maréchal de Montmorency, a Politique related to the family of Châtillon, of which Coligny was the head, thought he would be safer out of Paris, and wisely retired to his seat on pretext of illness. A day or two later Catherine de Médicis, her favourite son Anjou and Guise together endeavoured to have Coligny murdered by a man named Maurevert, who was nick-named the "King's Killer" (*le tueur du roi*), from his previous murder of the Seigneur de Mouy.

Maurevert fired at the Admiral with an arquebus, but only contrived to break a finger of his right hand and to shoot him in the left arm. Maurevert then fled, and Charles IX., hearing of this attack upon his now beloved Coligny, was furious. He vowed vengeance upon the Guises, whom he alone suspected of the crime, and went to see the Admiral. "God's Death!" he exclaimed furiously to his mother on his return, "what the Admiral tells me is true. All the handling of affairs is in your

hands and that of Anjou, but I'll take care to see to it before my best subject is killed."

The Huguenots were naturally furious at this outrage, which they attributed to the Duc de Guise, whom they sought to kill—and whose followers they caught and ill-treated. Some of the leaders openly said to the King that if the outrage were not punished the Calvinists would themselves take a bloody revenge.

Catherine and Anjou, afraid of their complicity being discovered, according to the narration of the Duc d'Anjou, in Villeroi's *Mémoires d'État*, determined to finish off the Admiral and all the Huguenots. For hours they argued with Charles IX., persuading him of the danger he stood in, and saying that the Admiral had sent to Germany and Switzerland for twenty thousand men, and, on August 23rd, 1572, suddenly the violent Charles IX. made up his mind. He determined to do as his mother and brother wished, and to have all the Huguenots, including the Admiral, slaughtered in the night-time, and gave his orders accordingly. All the gates of Paris were to be closed, and all the officers of the *bourgeois* guard of Paris warned to arm and be ready. The nineteen-year-old Marguerite de Valois, a bride of only six days, and apparently upon excellent terms with her young husband, was carefully kept in ignorance of the plot, which was in all probability to deprive him, as also his cousin of Condé, of his life. We will quote a portion of her memoirs which throw an excellent light on the events of the massacre.

CHAPTER VII

The Night of the Massacre

August 24th, 1572

After first explaining how Catherine had boldly told her son that she had herself sought to remove from the Kingdom "that pest, the Admiral de Coligny," and how, in consequence, her life was in as great danger from the Huguenots as was that of M. de Guise, Marguerite continues :

"King Charles, who was very prudent, and who had always been very obedient to the Queen his mother, suddenly took the resolution to join himself to her ; not, however, without extreme regret at not being able to save Téligny, La Noue, and M. de la Rochefoucauld. He sent for his mother, M. de Guise, and all the other Catholic princes and captains, when it was decided to execute that very night the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew. Setting to work at once, all the chain approaches to the bridges were fastened, and the tocsin sounded, each one rushing to the quarter allotted to him, to the Admiral as to all of the Huguenots. Monsieur de Guise made for the Admiral's lodging, where a German gentleman, named Besme, ascended to his room, stabbed him to the heart, and then threw him out of the window to his master, Monsieur de Guise.

"As for me, I had been told nothing of all this. The Huguenots held me in suspicion because I was Catholic, and the Catholics because I had married the King of Navarre, who was Protestant. So nobody told me anything till night, when, being present at the retiring of the Queen, my mother, sitting on a chest beside my sister Claude, the Duchess of Lorraine, who I noticed was very sad, the Queen saw me and told me to go off to bed. As I made my bow my sister took me by the arm and, commencing to weep bitterly, said: '*Mon Dieu*! Sister, do not go!' which frightened me excessively.

"The Queen, my mother, perceiving this, called my sister. She rated my sister soundly, and forbade her to tell me anything. My sister replied that it was not right to send me off to be sacrificed like that, for that, doubtless, if anything was found out, I should be the victim of their vengeance. My mother replied that if God willed it so He would protect me, but that I must go, for fear, if I stayed, that they should suspect something. I could see that they were quarrelling, but could not understand what they were saying. She commanded me again roughly to go to bed. My sister, melting into tears, bade me good-night without daring to add anything, and I went off all bewildered, without being able to imagine what it was that I had to fear. In my cabinet, I prayed to God to take me under His protection and deliver me, although I did not know from what or from whom. Thereupon the King, my husband, who was already in bed, sent and told me to come to bed. This I did, and found his bed surrounded by thirty or forty Huguenots. All night long they did nothing but talk of the accident which had befallen Monsieur l'Amiral,

resolving, as soon as it should be daylight, to ask justice of the King upon Monsieur de Guise, and that, if this was not granted them, to take it for themselves."

We must presume that the bed-curtains separated these angry Huguenots from the newly-married couple.

The Queen of Navarre goes on to describe how she passed a sleepless night, full of apprehensions and alarms, and how at daybreak her husband rose, taking all his gentlemen with him, saying that he would go and play at tennis until it was time to go and wait upon King Charles, to complain of the attempted assassination of the Admiral. Marguerite then fell asleep, imagining that the danger which the Duchess of Lorraine had so dreaded had passed by.

She was soon undeceived when a violent knocking, with shouts of "Navarre! Navarre!" were heard at her locked door, which she instantly ordered her ladies to open, imagining it to be her husband in imminent danger. Instantly there rushed in, pursued by four archers, a gentleman whom she calls Tejan, but who is called the Vicomte de Léran by other writers. He was a gentleman of the stable of the King of Navarre.

Bleeding from two wounds in his arm, this young nobleman flung himself into the bed of the Royal bride, when, in her own words: "I, feeling that these men had hold of me, flung myself out on the bedside, and he after me, holding me all the time round the body. I did not know this man, and I did not know if he came there to insult me, nor if the archers were after him or me. We were both crying out, and each of us frightened as the other.

"At last, by God's will, Monsieur de Nançay, the Captain of the Guards, arrived, and, finding me in this

plight, in spite of his pity for me he could not help laughing. He scolded the archers severely for their indiscretion and granted me the life of the poor fellow who was holding me and whom I caused to be put to bed, and his wounds to be attended to until he was completely cured. And changing my chemise, because he had covered it with blood, M. de Nançay related to me what was taking place, and assured me that the King, my husband, was in the King's chamber and would run no risk."

The Captain of the Guards then covered the newly made Queen of Navarre with a dressing gown, and led her off to the chamber of her sister Claude, more dead than alive. As she entered the room of the Duchesse de Lorraine, a gentleman named Bourse, flying from the archers, was transfixed by a halberd close to her—so close that she thought that both she herself and de Nançay, into whose arms she fell, had been pierced also by the weapon. The troubles of this unfortunate Princess were not over, for two of her husband's gentlemen, Monsieur de Miossans and Armagnac, his first valet, rushed to her for protection in her sister's bedchamber. She went and fell upon her knees to Catherine de Médicis and her brother Charles IX., and, after some difficulty, contrived to have their lives granted to her.

The organisers of the massacre, including, it would seem, the bloodthirsty Queen-Mother and the Duc d'Anjou, had meanwhile determined upon the death of Henri de Navarre and the Prince de Condé. These two Princes of the House of Bourbon had, however, by the orders of Charles IX., been conducted to the King's chamber, where they found their Royal cousin, in

a state of frenzy, firing upon the Huguenot fugitives from the window with his carbine.

There they had to listen to violent reproaches from the King and his mother, and were only accorded their lives by the former upon their consenting to renounce the Protestant religion and declare themselves Catholics.

Brantôme would have his readers believe that Marguerite it was who saved her husband's life, although with great difficulty, after throwing herself upon her knees before Charles IX. Marguerite would, however, have been certain to have mentioned this circumstance had such been the case, and the statement of the Sieur de Bourdeille has not been generally accepted with reference to this supposed incident.

Whatever may have been the actual facts on that occasion, it is certain, according to the account of Marguerite herself, that, a day or two after the completion of the horrible massacre, an attempt was made to "unmarry" the Queen of Navarre from the husband with whom she had been so recently provided by Catherine de Médicis, and that she then declined to be released from Henri de Bourbon.

She asserts that the prime movers in the recent butchery, which had cost the lives of many thousands of Huguenots all over France, were by no means contented that the Princes of the Blood had escaped, as they sought their destruction before that of all others. Feeling that, so long as Marguerite remained the wife of the King of Navarre, Charles IX. would protect his brother-in-law and his cousin Condé, they persuaded Catherine to break the marriage, after which these Princes might be killed with impunity.

Apparently nothing loath, the Queen-Mother called Marguerite to her, and with subtle casuistry put her daughter through a cross-examination upon the delicate subject as to whether or no the marriage had been consummated, explaining to her that should her reply be in the negative the marriage could be broken, as being null and void.

Marguerite de Valois was not, however, for nothing the daughter of an Italian mother, and in consequence was possessed with a considerable share of the Florentine's cunning. Whether she loved Henri or no, she was certainly on excellent terms with him. She also had no objection to being the Queen of one who, by some turn of Fortune's wheel, might some day be seated upon the throne of France. The young bride, therefore, in spite of her past record of improprieties, most naïvely played the *ingénue*. By modestly declaring that she was utterly unable to understand what the Queen-Mother meant by her questions, she eluded giving the reply which it was sought to obtain from her, and thus check-mated her mother's sinister designs, which were, as she knew, being instigated from Rome by the Cardinal de Lorraine. She ended up by saying—to quote her own words: "I was not qualified to answer her question, and indeed I was then in the same condition as that Roman lady whose husband had reproached her because she had not told him that his breath was unpleasant, and who replied that she fancied that all men were alike in this respect, never having been approached by any other man than him. But I said that, however it might be, since she had put me in this condition I preferred to abide in it, knowing that it was only proposed to separate me from him in order to play him an ill turn." In this manner

Marguerite certainly saved her husband, who, with the Prince de Condé, remained a prisoner at the Court. Both the Princes were, at all events for some time, very shabbily treated, but the abjuration of their faith satisfied Charles IX., who allowed no attempt to be made upon the lives of his brother-in-law and his cousin.

CHAPTER VIII

Three Prodigal Princes

1572—1573

If it was indirectly owing to his wife's determination to stick by her young husband that Henri owed his safety, another reason is given as the cause of the immunity of the Prince de Condé. This is that Élizabeth of Austria, the young Princess who was the too-much-neglected wife of Charles IX., intervened in his favour. A considerable number of Huguenots having found safety in La Rochelle, Heidelberg, England, and Geneva, the King one day sent for his arms, determined himself to finish off those of "the religion" whom he had in his power. He expressed to the Captain of the Guards his intention of beginning with the Prince de Condé. Then Élizabeth, whose rôle at Court was compelled, in the presence of Catherine, to be always one of self-effacement, for once took her courage in both hands, and determined to rescue the young Prince.

In the words of d'Aubigné: "But the Queen Élizabeth, with a face all disfigured from the tears she had shed since the evil days, came and threw herself upon her knees before her husband, who had as yet only put on his neckpiece and his corslet, and she disarmed him by her prayers."

After the massacre the existence of Henri de Navarre and Condé, who had been compelled to abjure their faith to save their lives, was of the most equivocal nature. By the King, who regretted his clemency and had them closely watched, they were regarded with suspicion; the austere Protestants suspected them also, and scorned them for having renounced their religion. Many of these loudly cried out against the Princes for not accomplishing the written vow which they had made to avenge the death of Gaspard de Coligny. Condé at length won his freedom by escaping to Geneva.

Many men would have succumbed to the storm raging around him on every side, and would not have known how to act under these embarrassing circumstances. Not so, however, Henri de Navarre. With Gascon cunning, he set to work to give a false impression of himself to those about him at the Court, to persuade every one that his character was so light and untrustworthy as to render him completely harmless and unworthy of molestation. He hid his ambitions and fears for his life under a cloak of indifference and good-natured vice. He covered all the great designs of a man who was but waiting for his time to arrive by insouciance, careless idleness, noisy frivolity, inoffensive good humour, and joviality.

His days were passed at tennis, at the chase, in pursuit of a petticoat. He lived the life of a prodigal Prince, in nocturnal adventures, with other dissipated young bloods of the Court, in visiting places of ill-fame, beating the watchmen of the street guard, or tossing the passers-by in a blanket. This display of a pacific and frivolous disposition quite took in those of the Court, who indulged in jests and practical jokes at his expense, all kinds of fooleries which he repaid in kind.

Thus this nineteen-year-old King, who so easily appeared to forget his Kingdom, his ambitions, and his duties as the head of the Protestant Churches, became merely an object of scorn. The Catholic lords treated with nothing but contempt this prisoner of a Prince, one who was made sport of by all with taunts and sneers, and of whom they said that "he had a bigger nose than a Kingdom."

To prove the sincerity of their conversion, when, a few months after the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, the Duc d'Anjou proceeded at the head of a large army to attack the Protestants who had shut themselves up in La Rochelle, the Prince de Condé and the King of Navarre were compelled to follow in his train, to bear arms against their co-religionists. The Duc d'Alençon, who had had no share in the horrors of the massacre, and whose breast was already filled with wild ambitions and hatred of his brothers, was also to be found in Anjou's camp before Rochelle, a place which, owing to the violent resistance of the inhabitants and garrison, that despicable Prince found himself utterly unable to reduce. The army of the Duc d'Anjou was undisciplined and full of malcontents, and at the head of these was the tricky young Duc d'Alençon.

He was at that time, in accordance with the views of the Queen-Mother, commencing the negotiations, which lasted for years, for the hand of the middle-aged Queen Elizabeth of England.

Strange to say, although the Virgin Queen had protested violently to Charles IX. after the horrors of the massacre, the vanity of this Princess was so great that she constantly encouraged the aspirations of her boy-suitor, Catholic though he was. A close connection,

however, secretly commenced before La Rochelle between d'Alençon, Henri de Navarre, Queen Elizabeth, and the French Protestants. To these latter François d'Alençon even promised in writing to avenge the death of the Admiral. At length, finding himself much suspected at the Court, he formed a plan to escape, and to take refuge with Elizabeth in England. He was, however, unable to put it in practice, especially as the King opened his brother's letters from Elizabeth, and wrote the answers to them, which he compelled François to sign.

D'Alençon was furious at being compelled to attend under his brother Henri's command at La Rochelle, and displayed his irritation so openly that he and the Duc d'Anjou almost came to blows. The King of Navarre, d'Alençon, and Condé were then scheming all to make their escape together from the camp, but the ever-watchful Catherine de Médicis contrived to thwart their plans by bringing about the election of her son, the Duc d'Anjou, to the throne of Poland, and concluding peace with the Protestants on favourable terms to the inhabitants of La Rochelle, which remained untaken.

The Princes were compelled to return to the Court at Paris, where a brilliant embassy of a hundred and fifty Polish nobles arrived in August 1573 to invite the Duc d'Anjou to come and take possession of the Polish Crown.

In the brilliant festivities which took place to entertain the Ambassadors, Marguerite de Valois shone out as much by her beauty and the magnificence of her attire as by the erudition which she displayed by discoursing with the Poles in Latin at their public reception before the whole Court of France. Brantôme expands in ecstasies over the beauty of the twenty-year-old Princess,

and the loveliness of her attire upon this occasion. It is evident that the Queen of Navarre was, indeed, the triumphant queen of the fête, and acknowledged as such by the magnificent Polish nobles, who said that, having seen her, they wished to behold nothing more.

When the festivities were concluded, and the Poles had left, Henri d'Anjou showed but little inclination to follow in their train, to go away into exile in a barbarous country, even if he were to become its king. At the Court of the Valois was to be found everything that his heart desired, and notably his fair mistress, Marie de Clèves, Princesse de Condé, to whom, after his departure, he wrote letters in his own blood.

Another reason why Henri d'Anjou, secretly encouraged by his mother, whose favourite son he was, delayed leaving Paris, was the weak state of health into which Charles IX. had fallen. Thinking that his brother would soon die, and he be on hand to succeed him, he determined to remain on the spot. He had the more reason for this as he dreaded lest, in his absence, seated upon the throne of Poland, his ambitious younger brother, d'Alençon, should forestall him upon the throne of France.

Charles IX., however, saw plainly through the wishes of his mother and his brother, and angrily resented seeing the Duc d'Anjou waiting to step into his shoes as soon as he should be dead. Getting into one of his fits of fury, the King at length screamed, "My brother, if you will not leave of good-will, I will compel you to do so by force!" Anjou was compelled to go, especially as Charles, with all the Court, left Paris with him, in order to see him well over the frontier and out of France.

Marguerite had formerly been on the most tender and

affectionate terms with her brother of Anjou, especially as she had faithfully complied with his earnest request to keep him and his interests ever in his mother's mind during his absences at the wars against the Huguenots. Of late, however, one of those detestable *mignons*, or darlings, with whom Henri III. ever surrounded himself, to the disgust of all decent people, had wrought mischief between the brother and sister, causing an absolute break in their former loving relations. The name of this favourite was Louis Béranger Du Guast. He was arrogant and overbearing, and the historian De Thou says of him : " He did not spare the first ladies of the Court, whose reputation he publicly assailed even in the presence of his Majesty ; he had even the impudence to slander one illustrious Princess."

Unfortunately for Marguerite, her levity of conduct only gave Du Guast too many opportunities to slander her, both at this time and later. She had, however, felt deeply grieved by the change in her brother's conduct towards her, especially as Catherine de Médicis had followed her favourite son's lead, and treated her daughter with marked coldness, and such indifference as even to endanger her life at the time of the massacre, as we have seen.

During the journey across France, however, Marguerite says of her brother d'Anjou : " He endeavoured to renew his friendship with me, trying by all the means in his power to make me forget the bad turns and ingratitude he had shown me."

Marguerite understood well the reason to be that, as before, he wished his sister to support his interests in his absence. That Catherine de Médicis did not expect this to be prolonged, and that she expected Charles IX.,

whose end many think she assisted with poison, to die soon is evident by her last words to her beloved Henri : "Adieu, my son ; you will not be long away."

Charles IX., owing to his increasing ill-health, had only been able to accompany his detested brother a short distance on this journey ; but it had been far enough to ensure the fact of his leaving France, and Catherine and the Court had gone on with Anjou as far as Lorraine. The Duc d'Alençon and Henri de Navarre had, in spite of themselves, been compelled to accompany the Queen-Mother, and on their return journey these two commenced to plot to escape from the Court, where they were always under surveillance. Their escape was all arranged, but unexpectedly prevented.

Marguerite, finding out from Miossans, one of the gentlemen whom she had saved from death, that her brother and her husband were about to join the forces of the Huguenots, hurried to give information to her mother and the King, and thus prevented their proposed evasion. The information had, however, only been given under the solemn promise that no harm should happen to the two Princes, and that the measures to be taken to prevent their flight should be so skilfully contrived that they should not be able even to suspect that their designs had been made known. In her Memoirs Marguerite says that she was guilty of this act of treachery "to prevent the ill effect which would have brought so many evils upon them and upon this State."

It is, however, difficult for us nowadays to understand her real motives for giving away the brother whom she says that she dearly loved, and the husband to whom she affects to show herself as being devoted. We can hardly believe her when she says that her act of treason



HENRI DE NAVARRE, AS A YOUNG MAN
(From a contemporary drawing in the Collection Hennin)

was really with the idea of rendering them a service; it seems far more probable that it was the result of a merely feminine and personal reason. This may have been that, by the outbreak of hostilities, which would commence as soon as the two princes had put themselves at the head of the Huguenot forces and those of the Politiques, she would lose the society of her latest lover. This was a gentleman from Provence named La Mole, whom she held very near to her heart, and who was in the service of the Duc d'Alençon.

It will be remembered by readers of Dumas's novel, *La Reine Margot*, that he makes of this La Mole the hero of the adventure in Marguerite's bedchamber which actually befell the Vicomte de Léran on the night of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew.

CHAPTER IX

Henri and Madame de Sauve

1572—1574

MARGUERITE takes very good care in her Memoirs to avoid any allusion to her own marital infidelities, and therefore there is not to be found in them anything concerning her relations with the unfortunate La Mole. She merely mentions the conspiracy, in which he and his friend M. de Coconas, the two intimates of the Duc d'Alençon, were concerned, and the death of La Mole, as an incident of the discovery of the Politique and Huguenot plot, of which she asserts that La Mole himself gave information to the Queen-Mother.

The Queen of Navarre is not, however, by any means so reticent where her husband is concerned, and accordingly, during the two years passed, after his marriage, by Henri as a kind of prisoner at the Court, she gives us plenty of insight into the state of the heart of "le Béarnais," and tells us plainly of his earliest infidelities, which were with Madame de Sauve.

It must be confessed that the frequent lapses of Marguerite gave ample excuse for those of Henri de Navarre, and it matters but little as to which of the precious pair was the first to disregard the marriage-tie, since husband and wife—for a time, at all events—lived

on the most friendly terms, and shut their eyes to each other's amourettes, or confided them to one another. Marguerite herself says that she was in the habit of receiving her husband's confidences concerning his love-affairs at this early stage in their married life, and there is plenty of evidence that he frequently only treated as a joke what he was told about her own. The future Henri IV. and d'Alençon, being retained at the Court of Charles IX. as prisoners, had, according to the Duc de Sully, but little to divert them "except flying quails in their rooms"; but, he adds, "these two Princes amused themselves at another game, which was to caress the ladies, with the result that they both became in love with the same beauty, who was Madame de Sauve."

This young lady was Charlotte de Beaune, daughter of the Baron de Semblançay, who was grandson of the unfortunate Jacques de Semblançay, Treasurer of François I., whom that King's mother, Louise de Savoie, caused to be hanged for revealing to her son the manner in which she had herself pocketed the funds intended for the army in Italy. The estates of the Treasurer were sequestrated, but, being restored later, they had descended to his great-grandchild Charlotte, who was thus a very rich heiress. She was married at a very early age to Simon de Fizes, Baron de Sauve, a Secretary of State to Charles IX., and who had been one of the originators of the Saint-Bartholomew massacre. This man seems to have been perfectly indifferent to his lovely young wife's morals, or rather her lack of them—he enjoyed her immense fortune, and that sufficed him. For that matter, it was quite open to her to tell her husband that she was but fulfilling her political functions as well as he, since many of the immoralities of this member of the Queen-

Mother's Flying Squadron of pretty women were, from motives of the highest policy, directly instigated by Catherine de Médicis, and by the minion Du Guast, acting on behalf of his master, Henri III.

Charlotte de Beaune was twice married, and that she behaved just as lightly in the time of her second marriage with the Marquis de Noirmoutier as during her first period of wedlock was notorious.

This woman was endowed with all the graces required to captivate the heart and the senses, and she bewitched, at the same time, not only the King of Navarre and d'Alençon, but was likewise on intimate terms with Du Guast and the Duc de Guise. Catherine de Médicis is said to have reaped more success in her policies by the employment of her young ladies than by diplomacy, and more conquests were gained for her by the good use they made of their *beaux yeux* than by the talents of her Generals. Of these ladies, Madame de Sauve was the most skilful in the use of enticing and meretricious arts. These, Mézeray says, "she employed not more for the designs of the Queen than for her own satisfaction, playing with all her dying swains with so absolute an empire that she never lost one of them, while constantly adding to their numbers." The mission confided to Madame de Sauve by Catherine was to stir up dissensions between her son-in-law and her youngest son. Both of these Princes, being in disgrace at the Court, were united by a bond of sympathy which made them dangerous; this alliance it was determined to destroy by making them rivals of one another in love.

Madame de Sauve succeeded admirably. The siren had but to throw a bewitching glance first to the King of Navarre, then to the Duc d'Alençon, when, lo! and

behold, she had them both chained to her pretty feet, and casting furious glances at one another.

After an agonising last illness, during which he suffered from terrible sweats of blood and imagined that he saw the spectres of those slain in the massacre, Charles IX. died on May 30th, 1574. He left no issue by his wife, Elizabeth of Austria, but one son by his mistress, Marie Touchet, who became the Duc d'Angoulême.

Warned by his mother to lose no time in returning to take possession of the throne of France, the King of Poland fled from his palace at Cracow in the night-time, and, carrying off the Polish crown-jewels with him, galloped away as hard as he could go, pursued by his dignitaries of State. These he eluded, and, crossing the Austrian dominions, reached Venice, where he remained for several months indulging in the wildest forms of licentiousness.

At length Henri III. reached France, where the uneasy Catherine de Médicis met him with the whole Court at Lyon. Henri de Navarre and d'Alençon, who, for their supposed share in the conspiracy of La Mole, had been imprisoned before the death of Charles IX., and kept subsequently in the Château de Vincennes—where Charles had died—by Catherine's orders, were set at liberty by the new King's instructions before his arrival in France. Before his death Charles had taken a most affectionate farewell of his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, but for his brother d'Alençon he had had nothing but a few cold words.

Henri de Navarre and d'Alençon, having both sworn to Catherine not to make any attempt against the Majesty of the new King, were taken by the Queen-

Mother with her to Lyon, both of them being placed by her under no other guard than the *beaux yeux* of Madame de Sauve, who was then the Queen's Mistress of the Robes.

Speaking of her later, to his great Minister the Duc de Sully, Henri IV. said, concerning himself and his brother-in-law: "Our first hatreds came from that woman. She used to show me the utmost good will, but before me she would always snub him, which made him furious." Henri flattered himself that he alone enjoyed the favours of this highly placed courtesan, but the Duc d'Alençon was in fact equally admitted to her intimacy. Thus they became furiously jealous of one another, and, from friends, became and remained bitter enemies.

And yet at that very time, according to Marguerite, "the Duc de Guise, Du Guast, de Souvray, and several others were all more beloved by this Circe than either of them." But for this the brothers-in-law did not trouble their heads; all that infuriated each was the attentions paid to the bewitching siren by the other.

Marguerite has much to say about this matter, the more so, perhaps, because it gives her the opportunity of indulging her hatred of her enemy Du Guast, whom, by-the-bye, she eventually contrived to have assassinated. "After the disaster of the death of King Charles IX.," says the Queen of Navarre, "a misfortune for me and for France, we went to Lyon to meet the King of Poland, who, still dominated by Le Guast, brought about the same results as before, by the same means; and, listening to the counsels of this pernicious wretch, whom he had left in France to further his interests, conceived a violent jealousy against my brother d'Alençon, being suspicious

of his friendship with the King, my husband. He saw in me the bond and the only link that bound their friendship, and thought that the best means of dissolving their alliance would be, on the one side, to put me at loggerheads and on bad terms with the King, my husband ; and, on the other, to manage that Madame de Sauve, of whom they were both the servitors, should treat them in such a manner as to render them extremely jealous.

"This abominable design, the source of infinite ills which my brother and I have since suffered, was carried out with as much hatred, ruse, and artifice as the way in which it had been invented."

Not content with this, Du Guast and the King, while still at Lyon, caused Marguerite public dishonour by a vile trick intended to discredit her in the eyes of her husband and all the Court. One day when, with a joyous party of six or eight persons of both sexes, the Queen of Navarre had gone to visit a convent, the King and his *mignons* pretended that they had seen her coach standing at the door of the lodging of Entragues, nicknamed Le Bel Entraguet, or Bidé, who had been one of her earliest lovers.

This nobleman was sick at the time, and the malicious *mignon* Ruffé, sent by the King nominally to verify his sister's presence in Bidé's apartment, came back to Henri III. and his dissolute companions, saying loudly, "They are not there now, but they have been there ; the birds have flown," or words to that effect.

Gleefully Henri III. drove off, and, after first informing Henri de Navarre that his wife was openly unfaithful to him with Bidé, whose lodging she was in, repeated the same lie to Catherine de Médicis. Henri

de Navarre, who did not believe a word of the story, listened to the King laughingly and pretended to make sport of the circumstance, but he hurried off to his wife at once to put her on her guard. He informed her of the plot against her honour, said that he knew it to be false, and told her that he very well understood the reason of the lie to be simply to breed dissension between them. He further told Marguerite to hurry off to the Queen-Mother at once and clear herself. By Catherine de Médicis her daughter was very ill-received. In the hearing of the ladies of the Court, Marguerite was violently upbraided for her levity of conduct, and not a word that she could say was listened to or believed.

Eventually, however, the testimony of Marguerite's many witnesses had to be listened to. Ruffé was convicted of being a liar, and Henri III. obliged to apologise profusely to his outraged sister, all the blame for the false report being, however, thrown by him and his mother upon an imaginary servant of the King, for whose name the Queen of Navarre asked in vain.

After this public insult, which had been deliberately planned, Marguerite naturally despised and hated her brother, but the hatred which she had for Du Guast knew no bounds. After this she made her husband and her brother swear an eternal pact of friendship with one another; but alas! love and passion were stronger than oaths, and the malign influence of Du Guast was sufficient to stir up Madame de Sauve to take a new tack effectually to separate husband and wife when the lie about Bidé had failed.

Madame de Sauve now informed the Béarnais that his wife was violently jealous of him, and that he had better beware of her. The result of this was that, whereas



CHARLES IX., KING OF FRANCE
Second Son of Catherine de Médicis
(From a painting by F. Clouet)

Henri had hitherto talked freely to his wife on the subject of his love-affairs, she being, she says, "in no wise jealous and only anxious for his contentment," he now withdrew his confidence from her, and scarcely spoke to her at all.

Worse than this, he now came back very late every night from the apartments of his mistress, and as Madame de Sauve insisted upon her lover attending daily at the Queen-Mother's up-rising, where her duties compelled her to be present, and as she kept him with her all day long, Marguerite hardly saw her husband at all.

It was in vain that the Queen of Navarre now tried with might and main to disentangle either her husband or her brother from the snares of the bewitching Lady of the Robes, for in one single night Madame de Sauve could undo all that she had done in a week. Sometimes this she-devil feigned passion for Henri, sometimes for François ; sometimes one was treated coldly or snubbed, sometimes the other, until at length the King of Navarre and the Duc d'Alençon sought to decide their quarrel sword in hand and man to man.

Meanwhile Du Guast and Henri III. sneered and chuckled over the success of their plans, and Marguerite was left alone, to rely for all comfort and consolation upon the ministrations of her new lover, the famous swordsman and lady-killer, Louis de Clermont, usually known as Bussy d'Amboise.

The terms of enmity existing between the Royal rivals at this time can be best illustrated by an anecdote from the pages of the historian Matthieu : "One night, when the Duc d'Alençon was with Madame de Sauve, the King of Navarre prepared a page's trick for him, with the result that, on coming away, he knocked up against something so roughly that he had his eye blackened. On the

morrow the King of Navarre, spying him from a distance, cried out, 'Eh! Mon Dieu, what is that I see in the eye? In the eye! oh! what a dreadful accident!' The Duc answered shortly, 'It is nothing; very little seems to astonish you.' Henri continuing to lament, the Duc, much piqued, but feigning laughter, advanced, and said in his ear, 'Whoever shall say that I got it where you think, I will make him swallow the lie.'

"Souvray and Du Guast intervening, prevented them from fighting."

CHAPTER X

Marguerite and La Mole

1574

In the same manner as Marguerite de Valois had been the cause of the failure of her husband and favourite brother to escape, when returning with the Queen-Mother from the frontiers of the Kingdom, so was she also the means of the discovery of the great plot of 1574, and of that which she had certainly not contemplated, the death of her lover La Mole, and his friend Annibal de Coconas. These events took place during the absence of the Duc d'Anjou upon the throne of Poland.

The conspiracy was mainly headed by the great lords of the Politique or Moderate Catholic party, closely allied to the Huguenots, and its cause was the treachery of Catherine de Médicis in various matters. She endeavoured, in a perfidious manner, to effect in peace-time the recapture of La Rochelle, but failed. She likewise sent off Maurevert, the famous "King's Assassin," who had failed to kill the Admiral de Coligny with his arquebus, upon a new mission of murder. This was to poison La Noue, the great Protestant leader, and the Maréchal de Montmorency, usually spoken of as the Duc d'Amville or Damville. He was Charles de Montmorency, third son of the Constable Anne, killed at the

battle of Saint-Denis in 1567. We also meet with him occasionally under the name of M. de Méru in Marguerite's Memoirs.

This plot failed, and soon four members of the great Montmorency family, the Kings of Languedoc, descended from Edred, King of England, were ready to take the field. Among them was the Seigneur de Thoré, who was Guillaume, youngest son of the Constable, and a very gallant soldier who distinguished himself greatly in subsequent years while fighting against The League.

While La Noue was organising the Protestant forces, the Politiques soon had another recruit, in the shape of the young and handsome Vicomte de Turenne, afterwards to become one of the lovers of the Queen of Navarre. He was a great-nephew of the Constable Anne de Montmorency, and connected by ties of blood with the Bourbon race to which Marguerite's husband belonged. France was thus seething with sedition, another great noble ready to take up arms being the Maréchal de Brissac-Cossé. Joseph de Boniface, Seigneur de la Mole, was the go-between and confidant of the various leaders. He was a very handsome young noble, and renowned as being the finest dancer of the Court. There he seems to have enjoyed the position of a privileged merry-fellow, to whom much was permitted. La Mole was likewise celebrated for two things : one of these being the frequency of his attendance at the Mass, the other his great successes with the fair sex. All of the time that he was not employing in the pursuit of a petticoat he passed in hearing the celebration of the Holy Office. When laughed at by his companions, or the Duc d'Alençon, whose great favourite he was, for his excessive devotion, La Mole explained that by his

frequent attendance at church, which took place several times a day, he was absolved from the consequences of his many sins against the moral code. This young noble was hardly of the type to make a great or successful conspirator, his vanity being so great that, relying on the protection of d'Alençon, he attempted to browbeat the great nobles who headed the plot, and arrogantly asserted for himself the right to an equal place with them at their council-table. Among those heading the rebellion against Charles IX., or rather the authority of his mother, there soon ran a rumour to the effect that not only the death of Damville, but that of the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé was being plotted at the Court. Catherine, well knowing that the Duc de Montmorency sought for the exalted rank of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, increased the discontent. Faithful to her usual system of preserving the balance of power between the great parties, she offered this very high post to the ruling Duc de Lorraine, the husband of her daughter Claude, and the cousin of Henri de Guise.

Thereupon the Duc de Montmorency openly expressed the demand that the post should be conferred upon the Duc d'Alençon, a request which only excited the greater anger of the Queen-Mother and Charles IX.

This young King hated, his brother's favourite, La Mole as much as it was possible for him to detest any one. During the siege of La Rochelle he twice gave instructions to his brother Anjou to strangle him, Lestoille says, "on account of certain private matters more connected with love than with war, for he was a gentleman who was a greater champion of Venus than of Mars."

Henri-Robert, Prince de Sedan, Duc de Bouillon,

the father-in-law of the Vicomte de Turenne, was also concerned in this conspiracy.

The *Mémoires* of Turenne, the eventual successor to the possessions and Duchy of Robert de la Marck, the "Wild Boar of the Ardennes," are a most precious source of information for everything dealing with this period. He remarks, of the events we are describing :

"Among all these things there were amours mixed up, which cause the greater number of the quarrels of the Court, and there are very few or no affairs there which the women have not got their share in, and most often they are the cause of infinite misfortunes to those who love them or whom they love."

While Henri de Navarre was playing the part of jolly good fellow, to keep in the good graces of his cousin Charles IX., whose prisoner he practically was, amusing the fiery and sickly young man with his broad stories and farces, or else running about after the Queen's girls, Marguerite was left pretty much to her own devices. She was, it must be remembered, celebrated throughout all Europe for her beauty. Brantôme says that strangers came from all parts simply to see her, and returned saying that they had seen "all the beauty of the world." Neglected by a husband who loved everybody's wife but his own, however handsome she might be, it is no matter for surprise if she showed too much complaisance to those young nobles who exerted themselves to the utmost to please and pay their Court to the lovely "Reine Margot."

Henri, of course, was only too well aware of the fact that, even before her marriage, this delicious Queen of Hearts of the dissolute Court of Catherine had been far too ready to accord the favours of her inestimable and world-renowned beauty to those ardent adorers, ever

so ready to cast themselves at her feet. To this fact must in a great measure doubtless be ascribed the indifference of "le Béarnais" to his wife's excessive charms.

One there was, however, who was by no means indifferent to them; nor was their owner indifferent to him in turn, although the pleasing amourette which ensued became a tragedy and cost him his head, after agonising tortures. This was the champion dancer of the Court, the great ladies' man, Joseph de Boniface, Seigneur de la Mole.

The day for the rising was already fixed, and the King of Navarre and d'Alençon had arranged to make their escape from Saint-Germain, where the Court then was, and to join the insurgents on Shrove Tuesday 1574. Something, however, went wrong; the expected force of Huguenots did not arrive in the vicinity, and meanwhile Catherine de Médicis gained an inkling of the plot. Aware of everything that went on at the Court, the Queen-Mother knew perfectly well of her daughter's liaison with La Mole. She went to her daughter and made use of her, commanding her to employ the intervals between tender love-passages in extracting all the details of the conspiracy from her lover.

What could the foolish La Mole do, when, with her glorious eyes melting into his own, the beautiful young Queen of Navarre begged him, as a proof of his love for her, to tell her all his secrets? With misplaced confidence, he poured out into her ear every detail of the conspiracy—not his secrets alone, but those of half of the important personages in the Kingdom.

And Marguerite—what did she do? The fair traitress, after rewarding her lover with an embrace, went off to her mother—and revealed everything.

This occurred on February 23rd, 1574, and terrible was the excitement that ensued, a description of which is given by Turenne, later Duc de Bouillon, himself one of the conspirators.

"Upon the fall of night, behold the alarm so hot that, not knowing the cause, perturbation was great. The baggage was loaded up, the Cardinals of Lorraine and Guise mounted their horses to fly to Paris, and others followed their example. The drums of the Swiss, of the French corps and companies, were all beating the assembly. . . .

"The departure of the King was instantly decided upon. My uncle, M. de Thoré, and I, who were at the village, at the lodging of M. le Connétable, were ready to be off if I would only listen to him. Having gone into the Château, where the King of Navarre had also been sent for, I found Monsieur (d'Alençon) and entered the Queen's chamber, where the King of Navarre approached me and said in my ear, 'Our man tells everything!' Then I approached my uncle, de Thoré, and told him to be off, for if he remained he was a dead man, for all the more reason that Monsieur, from his weakness and want of constancy, had deeply implicated him in his own confession to the Queen-Mother, and through the information given by La Mole."

The Duc de Bouillon, justly incensed at the perfidy of La Mole, goes on to accuse this foolish young noble of having given away the plans of his fellow-conspirators owing to pique, because he had not been admitted to all their councils, and, further, in the hopes of earning the gratitude of the Queen-Mother and the King. As Marguerite's unhappy lover, instead of earning either recompense or gratitude, was at once thrown into prison,

where none save his inhuman judges and torturers could have speech with him, it is evident that these accusations can be merely the result of supposition on the part of the author of the Memoirs. The Queen of Navarre takes care to say that she knew nothing of the plot, but that "it pleased God that La Mole should reveal it to the Queen, my mother," in the account that she gives of the midnight flight, from Saint-Germain to the Château of Vincennes, of the frightened King and the rest of the Court.

King Charles, who was a very sick man at the time, was conveyed in a litter surrounded with troops, while the Queen-Mother took with her, for safe keeping, in her own chariot the King of Navarre and the Duc d'Alençon, "who this time were not treated so gently as the other," for the King did not allow them to go out of the castle again. The Maréchaux de Montmorency and de Cossé were made prisoners at the same time, and were eventually only saved from being poisoned, by Catherine's orders, owing to the success of the manœuvres of d'Alençon, after he had made his escape from the Court in the following reign.

Several authors of the day, including Dreux du Radier and Lestoille, look upon both the unhappy La Mole and the unfortunate Coconas as having been more the victims of fate than personally guilty, as having been, indeed, made the scapegoats by Charles IX. for others greater and more guilty than themselves. Whatever may be the facts as to this, it is generally agreed that both Coconas and La Mole, respectively in love with Marguerite's bosom friend, the Duchesse de Nevers, and the Queen of Navarre, really lost their lives owing to the dangerous favours which this latter accorded to her lover.

We have already mentioned how Charles IX. detested La Mole, and in 1573 had vainly given his brother of Anjou the order to strangle him. A little later, as Pierre de Lestoille relates in his *Journal du Régne du Roy Henry III.*, Charles determined to assassinate this young courtier in person, having, no doubt, more than a shrewd suspicion of the terms that he was on with a lady of such exalted rank as his sister, the Queen of Navarre. Lestoille says: "Knowing that La Mole was in the chamber of Madame de Nevers in the Louvre, the King took with him the Duc de Guise and certain gentlemen, as many as six, to whom he commanded, upon their lives, to strangle him whom he should tell them with the cords which he served out to them for the purpose. Among this crew the King himself, carrying a lighted candle, disposed his fellow-hangmen upon the route which La Mole should take to go to the apartments of the Duc d'Alençon, his master. By good luck, however, the poor young man went downstairs instead, to join his mistress, without knowing anything at all of what was awaiting him."

It would have been better far for La Mole to have been strangled then than to live a little longer only to have all his bones torn from their sockets in the terrible torture-chamber. After his arrest he was found to be in possession of a little image fashioned in wax, of which the heart was pierced by a needle. This image alone was enough to ensure his execution. It had been made for him by Cosmo Ruggieri, the Queen-Mother's astrologer, who was also arrested, as it was pretended by Catherine that this image represented the King, whom she told that the needle was placed in the heart in order to ensure his death. It was in vain that La Mole declared that the waxen image



JOSEPH DE BONIFACE, SEIGNEUR DE LA MOLE
After Decapitation
(*From a sketch in the Bibliothèque Nationale*)

was that of a woman and not of a man, and that the needle was placed by the magician in the heart as a charm to bring him the love of an obdurate lady by penetrating her recalcitrant bosom with the divine fire from his own enamoured soul. His death had been resolved upon in advance, and both he and Coconas had to die accordingly, if only as an example to the Princes and great nobles in whose confidence they had been.

They were condemned, after being tortured, and, as Coconas had been one of the bloodiest of the gang of butchers of the Saint-Bartholomew massacre, but little pity can be accorded to him.

Cosmo Ruggieri was, however, too cunning to share the fate which they underwent in the Place de Grève on April 30th, 1574. This cunning charlatan played upon the superstitions of the Queen-Mother by reading in the stars that her fate was so closely interwoven with his own that when he should die she would die also. Cosmo was, accordingly, not only pardoned but restored to favour, after passing a short time in the galleys.

Lestoille tells us that the first to be executed was La Mole, "who was called the buffoon of the Court, and greatly beloved by the ladies and the Duc, his master." His last words were, like his life, mixed up with love and devotion. Just as the axe was raised to sever his head from his tortured body these were: "God and the Blessed Virgin have mercy upon my soul! Recommend me kindly to the good graces of the Queen of Navarre and all the ladies."

It is evidently from the *Divorce Satyrique* that the elder Dumas must have drawn the picture which he gives of the Queen of Navarre and the Duchesse de Nevers rescuing the heads of their respective lovers from

the hangman after the execution, when, their bodies having been divided into four quarters and attached to gibbets, their heads were stuck up upon poles. That pamphlet says: "These charitable ladies did not long leave exposed to the people these sad remains of their unhappy lovers; they carried off their heads themselves, put them in their chariot, went off with them to the Chapel of Saint-Martin, and, after bathing them in their tears, buried them themselves there with their own fair hands." For long Marguerite mourned the loss of her beloved La Mole, whose praises she caused to be written for her, under the name of Hyacinthe, by the gay and witty poet, the Abbé du Perron, who became a Cardinal.

CHAPTER XI

Marguerite and Bussy d'Amboise

1574—1575

While Henri de Navarre remained tightly bound in the fillets of that fair sorceress Madame de Sauve, Marguerite, after the arrival of Henri III. from Poland, was not long in seeking for new distractions to help her to banish from her memory the sad recollections connected with the melancholy ending of her love-affairs with La Mole.

This crowned Aspasia, who was as lively and *spirituelle* as she was pretty, contrived to make the hours not hang too heavy on her hands while in the company of either the Seigneur de Saint-Luc or the Duc de Mayenne, who was the brother of, that early object of her affections, the Duc de Guise.

The heart of La Mole was, we may imagine, already safely stowed away in one of the many pockets of the famous *vertugadin à pochettes*, of which speaks Tallemant des Réaux. "In each of these," he says, "she used to put a box in which was the heart of one of her lovers who had died, for she was of a careful turn of mind, and as soon as they passed away caused their hearts to be embalmed. This *vertugadin* (farthingale or crinoline) was hung up every night from a hook, which was fastened with a padlock behind the head of her bed."

With M. de Mayenne Marguerite had already had the commencement of a love-affair several years previously. But, according to du Vair, the modesty of the brother of Henri de Guise was then far greater than her own, with the result that the Princess was so much offended that she published this modern Joseph everywhere as a fool.

In later days neither the amourette with Saint-Luc nor that with Mayenne seem to have been affairs in which the affections of the Queen of Navarre were deeply concerned. She soon withdrew from each the small share of her heart which she had accorded him, to bestow that organ in its entirety, palpitating as though with the first passion of maidenhood, upon the invincible Louis de Clermont d'Amboise, Seigneur de Bussy.

In spite of all the skill with which Marguerite de Valois has contrived to conceal her love-affairs in the Memoirs written by her for Brantôme, and which she calls only "the result of an after-dinner's work," there are occasions when the very exaggeration of her *naïveté* compels the reader to pause and think. At times, notwithstanding the cleverness of the shapely hand that held the pen, the truth will peep through. It is, for example, quite impossible for this laughter-loving Queen to dissimulate her sentiments entirely when she deals with the boldest blade of the Court of the Valois, the hero whom three hundred men, sent by Du Guast, failed to conquer upon one memorable occasion.

The mention she makes of her first acquaintance with Bussy d'Amboise gives us a pretty little platonic picture of courtly politeness, rendered to the Princess, as her due, by a gallant nobleman of the suite of her brother d'Alençon—nothing more than that, no hint of the

ardent lover. And yet the fair chronicler cannot refrain from a little passing comment approbatory of the bravery of this gay spark, who, according to the testimony of Henri IV. as given in the *Divorce Satyrique*, was so very much too much to his fair and fickle spouse.

"When we were at Paris," says Marguerite, "my brother drew Bussy to his service, holding him in as great esteem as his valour merited. They were continually together, and in consequence with me, my brother and I being constantly in each other's company, and he having ordered his attendants to honour and pay respect to me as much as to himself. All the honest gentlemen of his suite obeyed this agreeable command with so much obedience that they showed me no less attention than they did him."

Du Guast, however, whom in her rage Marguerite calls "a pumpkin (*potiron*)," was not by any means inclined to allow his fair enemy to enjoy her pretty little idyll undisturbed. A spoil-sport, as usual, he told the King of Navarre that his wife had taken Bussy as a lover.

This spiteful *mignon* received but little satisfaction from "le Béarnais," who laughed at him, joked a bit, and pretended not to believe a word of the story.

None the less, in the *Divorce Satyrique*, which Henri de Navarre is supposed to have edited himself when he was seeking a divorce from Marguerite, he admits, and in very broad terms, that what Du Guast had told him was nothing but the truth.

Having failed to make mischief with the husband, Du Guast went off to the brother with more success. Henri III. was only too ready to listen to any story calculated to discredit Bussy, since he already nourished

rancour against him in his heart for having quitted his personal service to devote himself to his brother, d'Alençon.

Louis de Clermont, we may mention, was not only brave as a lion but most blood-thirsty by nature. He was celebrated as having been one of the foremost in slaughtering the Huguenots at the time of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew.

Marguerite triumphs in this change of masters on the part of Bussy. "Acquisition," she remarks, "which increased as much the glory of my brother as the envy of our enemies, for there did not exist at that time, of his sex or quality, anything similar in valour, reputation, grace, or wit."

Henri III. at once set to work to stir up the Queen-Mother against Marguerite, in the same manner as he had gone to her with the story about Bidé at Lyon. Catherine, however, had not forgotten the way in which she had been obliged to eat her words upon that occasion, when her daughter had been fortunately able to prove her innocence by an *alibi*.

She was not, therefore, inclined to run the risk of making herself appear a fool for the second time. Catherine de Médicis accordingly made excuses for the Queen of Navarre, and told the King plainly that she saw nothing suspicious in her conduct, even if Bussy d'Amboise was sometimes to be seen paying her his court in her chamber.

It may, of course, have suited the Queen-Mother's book to have her daughter thus hold the valiant Bussy in her leash; such would have been quite in accordance with the usual crookedness of her policy.

Du Guast thus having his nose put out of joint,

could not control his rage and thirst for vengeance. He prepared an ambush for Bussy d'Amboise, sending three hundred men of the Régiment des Sardes which he commanded to waylay and assassinate him. Ten of the King's *mignons* went to help in the murder. The combat which ensued was Homeric, when Bussy, accompanied by only a few of his friends, was attacked in the night-time in the streets of Paris. The champion himself was carrying his right arm in a sling, a pale grey scarf embroidered by Marguerite, he having recently been wounded in one of his innumerable duels. Another gentleman, a friend of his, likewise had his right arm supported in a similar sling, although, as Marguerite tells us with pride, it was not nearly such a smart one as the scarf worn by her lover. Unfortunately for this gentleman, after the party of Bussy d'Amboise had been charged furiously and the torches extinguished, he was mistaken for Bussy himself, and fell beneath the blows of the many who singled him out for slaughter.

Another gentleman, badly wounded in the first onslaught, rushed, all bloody, into the Louvre, shouting out that Bussy was surrounded and being murdered. The whole palace was in a state of wild alarm, and the Duc d'Alençon, forgetting his rank, seized his sword and was about to rush down into the streets to join in the fight and assist his favourite. The Queen of Navarre, however, threw her arms around François, while the Queen-Mother, coming upon the scene, pointed out to her son what folly it would be to go out thus in the middle of the night, when darkness covered all kinds of crimes. She added that the whole affair might be a trick on the part of Du Guast to draw the Duc d'Alençon into the fray and to get him murdered. As a further

precaution, Catherine ordered the guards on the doors not to allow François to leave the Louvre, which order settled the matter.

Directly afterwards arrived a message from Bussy himself, to say that he was unharmed and had gained his lodging in safety. On the following morning "as soon as it was daylight," says Marguerite, "he returned to the Louvre with as gallant and gay demeanour as if this attack upon him had been merely a little passage of arms arranged for his amusement."

Catherine de Médicis, fearing that the frequent attacks and quarrels fixed upon Bussy, who indeed courted them and was always victorious, would bring about serious trouble between the miserable Henri III. and François, advised this latter to send his favourite away for a time. Marguerite added, her entreaties to the same effect, in her solicitude for both her lover and her brother, and to these d'Alençon listened. "Accordingly," continues the Queen of Navarre, "Bussy, who had no will but that of his master, took his departure, attended by the most gallant of the nobles of my brother's retinue.

"Le Guast was thus relieved of this matter, and, as it happened that the King my husband was at this time seized one night with a serious weakness during which he remained in a faint for an hour (the result, I believe, of his amorous excesses), during which I assisted him with devotion . . . he treated me with much more kindness, and the friendship between him and my brother was renewed." It now seemed as if the troubles between the formerly allied trio, of Henri, François, and Marguerite, were about to come to an end ; but alas ! the vicious Du Guast was soon again to the fore, and contrived to bring about a breach, which was not

to be healed for several years, between the husband and wife.

Among those of Marguerite's maids of honour whom Marguerite loved the best was a certain young lady named Gillone de Thorigny, the daughter of the Maréchal Jacques de Matignon. This girl was the confidante of Marguerite, and Du Guast informed Henri III. of the fact that she it was who was the go-between in the matter of his sister's various amours. Here, indeed, felt the mean-minded King, was an opportunity of at least hurting his sister in her tenderest feelings. He would tell his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, to order his wife to get rid of Thorigny. As for reason, it would be reason enough to say that "one should not allow Princesses to have girls about them for whom they entertained so much affection."

Henri de Navarre was sent for, and the definite order given, when the King of Navarre had no choice but to comply with the King's commands.

Du Guast was, it must be admitted, a clever fellow, and a redoubtable foe ; one who could see only too easily the weak places in the armour of his adversary. He was personally brave and a good swordsman, and we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be too much prejudiced against him by the *ex parte* statements of the by no means immaculate Queen of Navarre. He had ample means of learning what were the nature of those services rendered by Mademoiselle de Thorigny, that made her so precious to her mistress, and knew, only too well, that by forcing the Béarnais to make his wife get rid of the girl who opened the doors to her lovers the long-desired breach would be infallibly procured. This time the clever adversary of Marguerite came out on top.

The French have a saying, "*de toutes bonnes choses, trois!*" Du Guast's first two *bonnes choses* had proved nothing but missfires ; the third, however, went straight to the mark.

Marguerite writhed and wriggled under the order which her husband gave her—not, we can well imagine, without a certain inward satisfaction—to get rid of a girl who was the cause of constantly making him look a fool in the eyes of the whole Court by introducing dishonour into his household.

Good-natured as he was, however, it was much against the grain that Henri complied with the King's menacing command, for his wife and he had, after all, been *associés* hitherto. Marguerite had even helped him very much at the time when, before the death of Charles IX., he and d'Alençon had been prisoners at Vincennes. With her able pen she had drawn up for him a line of defence of which he had made use with the most brilliant success.

She had also been quite willing to endanger her own safety, to run the risk of encountering the full fury of the Queen-Mother at that time, by aiding either her husband or her brother to escape disguised as one of her women. It might very probably have been this very Gillonne de Thorigny who would have been left behind in the prison, dressed up as Henri de Navarre, while the King of Navarre would have been gaily driving off with his wife in her chariot, robed in the petticoats of the somewhat too compliant daughter of Jacques de Matignon.

It had not been Marguerite's fault if neither her husband nor her brother had escaped upon that occasion. They could not quite agree with her theory, which was that if only one of them were at liberty he would be able to ensure the safety of the other left behind. Neither of

them had wanted to be the one left behind, and therefore neither of them consented to change clothing with the sharp-witted Gillonne, the up-to-date maid of honour, who now was to be roughly flung from the doors of the Louvre that she knew so well the trick of opening and shutting at any hour of the night.

In spite of his kindly feelings towards his wife, the repeated order of the King left the Béarnais no choice. He caused his wife the cruel displeasure of ordering her to send her confidante about her business, and that without delay, at once! Imagine the surprise of the disconcerted Marguerite, who had doubtless some little plan on hand, arranged for that very evening. In that plan she would doubtless have been expecting that her beloved Thorigny was, as usual, to assist her, when she was told, suddenly and authoritatively, that before nightfall she must have said farewell to her for ever.

So great, she tells us, was her just resentment "that I could no longer force myself to seek the society of the King, my husband. In this way, what with Le Guast and Madame de Sauvre estranging him from me on the one side, and I keeping myself away from him also, we neither slept nor spoke any more together."

The vengeance of Henri III. upon his sister did not confine itself to the mere expulsion of her confidante. On the contrary, the King and his *mignon* Du Guast next arranged to murder the girl, who had fled to the château of a cousin of hers, the Seigneur de Chastelas.

To this place of refuge a party of the King's troops came, with the mission of taking Gillonne away to drown her in the river not far distant. De Chastelas, receiving the order from the officer commanding these troops to deliver up his cousin to him, that she might be taken

back to the King, was too wise to offer any objection, although he had a shrewd suspicion, speedily confirmed, that it was merely to hang or break the fair neck of Thorigny that the custody of her person was demanded.

"Oh! certainly," he replied, temporising; "take the young lady back to the King by all means; but it is late, and your men look hungry, and especially thirsty; will not you and they do me the honour of accepting the poor hospitality of my roof for just one night?"

Yes, they were all hungry, and especially thirsty, and they proved it so well that not only did the soldiers drain dry the cellars of de Chastelas, and pillage his castle from top to bottom, but they likewise slept very late on the following morning. As it happened, some of the servants, flying from the château early that morning, fell in with a party of two hundred horsemen who were on their way to join the army which the Duc d'Alençon was, against his brother's wishes, raising at this time to forward his ambitious scheme for making himself the ruler of the Low Countries, then occupied by Spanish troops.

The commanders of this force were brothers, named La Ferté and Avantigny, both Chamberlains of François d'Alençon. As good luck would have it, La Ferté recognised one of the servants. "Why, what is the matter with my good friend Chastelas?" he inquired; "and what has happened to all of you, that you are flying in such terror?"

"Oh, Monsieur! the King's troops have had the unfortunate Mademoiselle de Thorigny locked up in a room all night, and this morning they are going to drown her in the river!"

"Are they, indeed? We will see about that!" Putting spurs to their horses, the brothers arrived with



LOUIS DE BERANGER DU GUAST
(From a sketch in the Bibliothèque Nationale)

their mounted men just as the struggling and screaming Gillonne was being tightly bound on the back of a horse, to be led away to be drowned by the still half-drunken emissaries of Du Guast.

Sword in hand, and shouting "Stop, butchers! or you are all dead men!" the troops of d'Alençon charged, and rescued the unhappy girl from the King's soldiers, who all took to flight.

Mademoiselle de Thorigny, overcome with joy at her escape, was at once driven off by these good fellows in the coach of Chastelas. They carried her to the protection of François, who had a few days previously quietly walked out of the Louvre in disguise and gained the town of Dreux, which formed a part of his appanage. Here the Duc d'Alençon found himself in safety.

CHAPTER XII

Henri Escapes from Paris

1576

PRIOR to the escape of François from the Louvre, which took place on September 15th, 1575, he and his brother-in-law had endeavoured to bury the hatchet over their dispute concerning the too seductive Madame de Sauve, and if possible to get away together from the Court. There both of the Princes felt continually an uncomfortable creepy feeling at the back of the neck, such as to cause them at times to raise the hand with the object of ascertaining if their heads were still upon their shoulders.

It was so evident to both that Du Guast, who ruled the King, was himself the real Monarch, so evident that he hated them both and was always seeking to do them an ill turn, above all so plainly apparent that he was the cause of their division, that the two Princes determined that there would be no safety for them but in flight. Although, in order to avoid possible confusion of names, we have continued to call François by the title of d'Alençon, he had now actually succeeded to that of Duc d'Anjou, which had been the title of Henri III. before his accession. D'Alençon had not, however, had his condition improved in proportion to his position as heir to the throne. He was still treated by the King

as a poor younger brother, having been accorded no increase of appanage in spite of his increased importance, owing to the fact that Louise de Vaudémont showed no signs of producing a son to oust him from the direct line of succession to his brother's throne.

This young Princess belonged to a junior branch of the House of Lorraine, and Henri III. had made her acquaintance upon his journey to Poland. Notwithstanding the fact that he was then daily sending back burning epistles, signed with his blood, to his mistress the Princesse de Condé, Henri had been very much struck by the dollish beauty of Louise. Accordingly, although she had neither the position nor the fortune suitable in the wife of a King of France, he had, upon his return from Poland, married her, on the day after his coronation at Rheims. In spite of the disgraceful profligacy of her husband, and the fact that Catherine de Médicis ever contrived to kept them apart, Louise was always faithful to Henri III., while leading a blameless and obscure existence.

Immediately previous to his marriage to the remarkably pretty Louise de Vaudémont, Henri had been proclaiming himself as inconsolable for the Princesse de Condé, who died, at the age of twenty-one, at the Louvre in October 1574. As a public demonstration of his grief for another man's wife, the new King appeared everywhere in mourning of a most ghastly description, his dress being of black, covered all over with death's-heads. This affectation had not, however, prevented this despicable Prince from indulging in the wildest debauchery, in Venice and Savoy, during the four months which separated the death of the Princesse de Condé from his marriage to Louise de Vaudémont.

While d'Alençon had been put in possession of no proper appanage suitable to his increased importance, Henri de Navarre likewise found himself, for one reason or another, totally unable to procure sufficient funds wherewith to keep up his proper rank and style at the Court of France. And yet that he should have had enough and to spare is evident from the long list of his possessions, which were, it must be confessed, quite sufficient to make of him an eligible *parti* in the eyes of Marguerite at the time of their marriage.

He was not only King of all that remained of the ancient Kingdom of Navarre, now restricted to territory on the French side of the Pyrenees, but, as the head of the House of Bourbon, Henri owned large domains from the Pyrenees to far beyond the Garonne. He possessed the Principality of Béarn, the Duchies of Vendôme, Albret, and Beaumont, the Counties of Armagnac, Bigorre, and Rouergue, likewise of Perigord and Marle. In addition to these, the King of Navarre owned the Viscounties of Marsac and Limoges, and the Baronies of half a dozen places into the bargain.

Notwithstanding all this string of possessions, Henri de Navarre agreed with François d'Alençon that they were both very hardly treated young men, and that the King ought to endow them both with something worth having, befitting to their rank. Above all things, the King should see that their dues and allowances were regularly paid.

Since, however, Henri III. did not seem inclined to do anything of the sort, they agreed that they had better turn their backs once and for all on his beggarly Court, where all seemed to belong to Du Guast, and carve their fortunes for themselves elsewhere, sword in hand.

D'Alençon had his course shaped out in his mind already. It was to put himself at the head of the discontented Politique party, and eventually marry Elizabeth of England, and become the independent ruler of Flanders.

Henri proposed, first, to take possession of his Kingdom of Navarre and Government of Guyenne, and then to place himself at the head of the Huguenots. Above all, the King of Navarre wished to take possession of his government of the great province of Guyenne, but up to the present he had not, since his first arrival in Paris and his marriage, been permitted to visit any of his estates, and much less to assume any independent position of authority.

This resolution being taken, on account of the common safety, Alençon pointed out that, for their mutual welfare's sake, the friendship of Marguerite ought to be regained by his brother-in-law. He went accordingly to his sister, in the part of a peacemaker, and told her that he would like to see her and her husband on friendly terms once more. At the same time François assured Marguerite that the King of Navarre had expressed to him the greatest regret for what had taken place, and said that he was perfectly well aware that the misunderstanding had been brought about by their common enemies, but that he was resolved to love his wife in future and to give her more cause to be contented with him. D'Alençon further begged his sister to love the King of Navarre and to look after his affairs during his absence.

It was arranged that François should go first and that Henri should follow a few days later, upon pretence of a hunting-party. The Duc d'Alençon, as we have said, got clear away from the Louvre one night and joined several hundreds of his partisans who were expecting him.

When Henri III. became convinced that he was actually gone his fury knew no bounds, and he ordered some of the nobles of the Court to pursue his brother and bring him back, dead or alive. This, however, some declined to do, while others made a pretence of following François.

After this successful evasion by François, Henri de Navarre found himself more than ever slighted by the King, while his wife, upset by the emotion consequent upon the disturbance caused by her brother's escape, became ill with a bad feverish cold and neuralgia in the face. This was accompanied with a kind of erysipelas. These complaints appear to have confined the Queen of Navarre to her rooms for some time, during which Henri neglected her shamefully. Keeping up more than ever his appearance of insouciance and frivolity, partly no doubt the better to conceal his designs, he devoted himself entirely to Madame de Sauve. Marguerite says that he was afraid of wasting the last precious moments that he had to pass at his charmer's feet, and never came to bed, in consequence, until one or two in the morning. His wife, being then asleep in a separate bed, declares that she never heard him come. In the morning Henri was up again early, so as to be present with the object of his adoration at the rising of the Queen-Mother.

By this conduct Henri certainly deceived the King, Catherine de Médicis, and the whole Court; no one ever imagined that he could dream of tearing himself away from the siren who had bewitched him, and whom, in the absence of d'Alençon, he now had all to himself. He even deceived his own intimate followers, Agrippa d'Aubigné and Armagnac, who were the only two of the

gentlemen of his own party who had been left to him. These faithful adherents could, however, see no signs of any deep-laid scheme of policy, as Henri hung on week after week at the Court, even after d'Alençon had taken command of the Politique and Huguenot forces combined. To them the conduct of Henri de Navarre appeared not only that of a profligate, but mean-spirited in the extreme ; the more so since he then was constantly a suppliant for the great post of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, which was being dangled before his face by the Queen-Mother and the King, without the slightest intention of ever giving it to him.

As a matter of fact, the King of Navarre was openly despised at this time at the Court, where the Duc de Guise, as well as Du Guast and the other *mignons*, were in the habit of insulting him outrageously in the tennis-court. Henri de Navarre himself eventually realised the despicable position in which he was placed, while d'Aubigné and Armagnac could stand the situation no longer.

Their master at length gave these two gentlemen an opportunity of speaking out their minds to him, which was not by any means neglected, they plainly threatening to abandon him to his fate unless he ceased to abandon himself as he was doing.

This was when, one night, they heard the now twenty-two-year-old Prince lamenting himself in his bed, repeating aloud the words of Psalm lxxxviii. : " Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me, and made me to be abhorred of them. I am so fast in prison that I cannot get forth."

Agrippa d'Aubigné then said : " Is it true then, Sire, that the Spirit of God still abides and works in you ?

You sigh to Him for the absence of your friends and faithful servitors, while they are met together sighing for your absence and working for your deliverance. But you have only tears in the eyes, while they have arms in hand; they combat your enemies, while you serve them; they fill them with veritable fears, while you pay your court to them from false hopes; they only fear God, but you a woman, before whom you join your hands, while they have the fist clenched; they are on horseback, you on your knees. Behold Monsieur [d'Alençon] now the head of those who watched your cradle, and who do not take great pleasure in serving under him who has his altars the opposite way of the grain to yours. What giddiness of spirit has made you choose to be a valet here instead of a master there; the scorn of the despised when you should be the first of all those to be feared?"

This exordium on the part of the worthy d'Aubigné —the historian and poet—was sufficient to make the Béarnais determined to escape at once, if possible, from his disgraceful position. A plot was formed to escape while hunting in the forest of Senlis, eight or ten gentlemen being in the plot, one of the most devoted of whom was apparently Fervacques, in whose rooms the conspirators assembled.

No sooner, however, had the King of Navarre, after making a great show of cheerily begging the Duc de Guise to go off hunting with him, repaired to Senlis than this very Fervacques was seen and overheard by the watchful d'Aubigné revealing the plot to the King. Henri had, however, taken in the whole of the Court on the previous day, by his assumed *bonhomie*, when all booted and spurred before his departure. He had like-

wise made a great show of begging once more for the so greatly coveted post of Lieutenant-General, and of pretending to feel confident that the King was just about to bestow it upon him.

The Duc de Guise and the Queen-Mother were chuckling together to think how completely he was being duped, with the result that, although orders had been about to be given to withdraw permission for the hunting-party at Senlis, the supposed dupe had been allowed to go, as not being worth retaining, so certain was he to return.

No sooner had Fervacques played the traitor than the fat was in the fire. Quick, however, as was the King to have the gates of the city closed, d'Aubigné, with a friend, a young noble named Roquelaure, were before him, out of Paris, and galloping for dear life to rejoin the King of Navarre. They were far ahead of the King's equerries, sent off likewise upon the road to Senlis, to watch it. Henri they found, accompanied by two gentlemen, who had been sent with him to watch him, named Saint-Martin and Spalungue, the latter being a young lieutenant in the Guards. These two spies, after meeting Henri and telling him the news, his friends wished to kill. The King of Navarre was, however, too crafty to commit such an error; he very cunningly got rid of both his jailors without any crime.

After pretending to instal himself in lodgings in the faubourgs of Senlis, and making arrangements to hear a party of travelling comedians that night, he first contrived to send off Saint-Martin, and then Spalungue, with absurd and deceitful messages to the King. He offered to return at once in case the King should be suspecting him, owing to the reports of his enemies; also

sent greetings, wishing him good morning, the best of health, and nonsense of that description. Saint-Martin reached the King as he was rising, and quite took him in from the report he gave of the King of Navarre's movements and intentions. Spalungue, who had lost himself on the way, only arrived late on the following afternoon —which was that of a dark day in February 1576. By this time the cautious Catherine de Médicis declared that it was necessary to send off troops to watch the various roads by which the King of Navarre could escape from Senlis. This clever woman it was, however, who had been duped for once, and effectually so, by "le Béarnais," whom she so despised.

Her son-in-law, the husband of Marguerite, was not the fool she took him for. He had had twenty-four hours' start of the troops, and was very many miles away when they arrived in order to surround the roads from Senlis. Throughout the course of a bitterly cold and dark night Henri and his companions travelled through wild forest roadways. They crossed the river Oise, and likewise the river Seine, by a ferry a league from the town of Poissy at dawn, whence they made their way through a country full of soldiers to Châteauneuf, and thence on to the towns of Alençon and Saumur.

The *Mémoires* and the *Histoire Universelle* of Agrippa d'Aubigné are inexhaustible mines wherein to delve for the varied events of this portion of the career of Henri IV., nor are they devoid of amusing incidents, some of which, however, are rather too broad for repetition. One, however, detailed in the *Mémoires*, relates to the journey of the little party of fugitives during the morning after the flight from Senlis.

Then a country gentleman, perceiving the small band

of armed men approaching the village of which he was the proprietor, rode out to beg them to avoid it. For, in those days, armed men were in the habit only too often of treating country hamlets as places in which they could help themselves to all that they required without payment —the château and the cottage alike faring badly. This gentleman selected Roquelaure as the captain of the troop, owing to his being more richly dressed than the others, and, naturally, it was not thought necessary to undeceive him. Merely in order to keep this country noble with them, lest he should give information, Roquelaure granted him his village, upon the condition that he should guide his company as far as Châteauneuf.

Upon the journey he chattered away gaily with the jovial young King of Navarre, telling him merry scandals of the Court, and especially of the gallantries of the Princesses, in which he particularly did not spare those of the Queen of Navarre. On arrival at nightfall at the gates of Châteauneuf, the Sieur de Frontenac called out to the captain l'Espine, who appeared on the walls, "Open to your master!"

The gentleman, who knew to whom Châteauneuf belonged, was seized with a terrible fright, and Aubigné made him take himself off by a side-road, in order to escape and not be able to return to his home for several days.

After the Béarnais had crossed the River Loire at Saumur, he at length considered himself in safety. "May God be praised!" he exclaimed with a deep sigh, "for delivering me. They caused my mother's death at Paris, they killed the Admiral and all our best adherents there, and they had not any intention of treating me any better but for God's protection. Never, unless I am

dragged there, will I return." Then, jeering according to his usual custom, the King of Navarre added, "I only regret two things which I have left behind me at Paris—the Mass and my wife. As for the Mass, however, I will try and do without it ; but as for my wife, I cannot have her back, but should like to."

In the meantime his said wife was having but a poor time of it in Paris, where the King made his sister pay for the various escapes which had taken place. It was in vain for Marguerite to declare, as she does in her Memoirs, when speaking of her husband's escape and with reference to his being constantly in the company of "la Sauve" : "In this manner he forgot to talk to me as he had promised my brother, and even went off at last without bidding me farewell."

Neither the Queen-Mother nor Henri III. would believe that the young Queen of Navarre was not in the confidence of both her brother and her husband in the matter of their respective escapes, and all her brother's wrath fell upon her. So furious was Henri III. at the fact of the Protestant King of Navarre having broken his bonds, after practically having endured three and a half years' imprisonment at the Court, that, in his rage, he would probably have taken his sister's life had not Catherine de Médicis intervened.

Marguerite was, however, put under close arrest in her apartments in the Louvre, while guards were put over her doors, to prevent her from escaping to join her husband and writing to or receiving letters from him.

For when this unlucky Princess declared to her mother that Henri had left without even bidding her adieu, Catherine replied, with considerable knowledge of human nature : "That is all nothing but a little quarrel

between husband and wife; but we know very well that with a few sweet letters he will regain your heart, and that, if he sends for you, you will go and join him, which is what the King my son will not have."

So Marguerite was locked up for a long time, and it was while she was thus in durance vile that Du Guast instigated the King to order the death by drowning of his sister's favourite, Gillonne de Thorigny, who escaped as we have related.

During her confinement no one at the Court visited her with the exception of Crillon. He was a brave young noble, a Knight of Malta whose full names were Louis de Berton des Balbes de Crillon, who held subsequently the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel-Général of the French Infantry, and who became one of the most celebrated captains of Henri IV. Crillon was the intimate friend of Bussy d'Amboise, with whom he had formerly, however, fought a duel, so no doubt it was solely to talk of her absent gallant that this brave fellow, when all else neglected the Queen of Navarre, forced his way into her prison.

We are told that "he went five or six times to visit her, so astonishing those who guarded the door that they never dared to say nay nor to refuse him the passage."

Meanwhile Henri III., baulked of his desire to strangle his sister or drown her lady of honour Thorigny, determined to hang Fervacques, whom he characterised, and rightly, as being a double traitor. Crillon, however, warned Fervacques, who fled to join the King of Navarre, whom he had betrayed. Apparently he gave some excuse, such as that of compulsion, to the Béarnais, who forgave him and received him

although not without having to listen to the remonstrances of the faithful d'Aubigné for his compliance.

Catherine de Médicis was now sent off as a suppliant to beg her son d'Alençon to return and place himself once more under his brother's tender care at Paris. The King was almost without money and without troops, while Condé, having made a treaty with the Elector Palatine, was about to enter France with German troops under his son, the Duke John Casimir, and to join d'Alençon. The German Protestant troops had soon combined with those under François, and several large cities of Bourbonnais were taken and ransomed for great sums of money. Before Catherine de Médicis contrived to procure an interview with her son, who avoided her, the King of Navarre was likewise in arms elsewhere; altogether fifty thousand men, Protestants or Politiques, being in rebellion under the three Princes.

Marguerite would have accompanied the Queen-Mother in her mission to the Duc d'Alençon had Catherine but been listened to by the King, who, however, refused to loose his sister from her prison.

The result was that Catherine's mission was a failure, as d'Alençon refused to treat for terms of peace unless Marguerite were set at liberty. Catherine had to return to Paris accordingly and fetch her daughter, to whom, in his anxiety for peace, Henri III. made the most abject apologies for his conduct; but François now refused to hear of any proposals unless the Maréchaux de Montmorency and Brissac-Cossé were released from the Bastille, where it was said that Catherine had made preparations to have them both poisoned. These two Marshals of France were accordingly released.

Peace was now made on the most favourable terms



HENRI III., KING OF FRANCE
Third Son of Catherine de Médicis

to the Protestants and the Politiques. It was called the "Peace of Monsieur," and signed at Loches in April 1576. François had his appanage increased threefold, he became definitely Duc d'Anjou, and was granted an extra 100,000 gold crowns yearly. The King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé were likewise confirmed in all their charges and offices by this peace.

CHAPTER XIII

Violent Death of Du Guast and Bussy

1575—1577

In spite of the guards who for several months had confined Marguerite to her apartments, she had contrived not only to receive letters from her husband but to keep up a friendly correspondence with him, although he was in arms against her brother the King. Catherine, therefore, had proved to be right, and it had been nothing but a little quarrel between husband and wife, after all. Once Henri de Navarre was away from his evil genius, Madame de Sauve, his old feeling of comradeship with Marguerite returned, he wrote to her affectionately, while she, in return, contrived to send him the news of everything that was taking place at the Court.

Not many months after Catherine and her Flying Squadron of beautiful girls had accompanied Marguerite to the camp of François, and, owing to the intervention of the Queen of Navarre, a peace had been concluded so much to the advantage of the Huguenots, all for a time was peace and amity at the Court. This was assembled at that most delightful Royal residence of Chenonceaux, on the river Cher in the province of Touraine, which had been wrested from Diane de

Poitiers, the mistress of Henri II., by Catherine de Médicis on her husband's death. D'Alençon was now apparently on excellent terms with his brother, and Bussy also in favour. This beautiful château stood on an island, being connected with each bank by elegant bridges, and here Catherine celebrated the investiture of d'Alençon with the three Duchies of Anjou, Touraine, and Berry by a series of fêtes of a most extravagant description. During these the Queen-Mother's young ladies served at table in a half-naked condition.

War had, however, broken out again almost immediately between the King of France and the King of Navarre. This latter had demanded his wife back from his brother-in-law, but Henri III., saying that he had given his sister "to a Catholic, and not to a Protestant," as the Béarnais had again become, had roughly refused to send her to him. Henri de Navarre, however, contrived to obtain possession of his seventeen-year-old sister, Catherine de Bourbon, who had been detained at the Court; and this most amiable young Princess had, like her brother, abjured the Catholic religion upon joining him. In this new war which had broken out d'Alençon, won over by his brother's caresses and the advantages he found to accrue to him by being well treated at Court, most meanly deserted the Protestant cause, and even took command against those with whom he had previously been upon such friendly terms.

Previous to this, however, Marguerite, while enjoying herself to the utmost at Court with her lover, Bussy d'Amboise, had thought fit to make a great show of wishing to return to her husband, now in his Kingdom of Navarre. She even menaced to rejoin her husband,

"no matter by what means, even if it was at the peril of her life." Needless to say, her propositions were not listened to by either the King or the Queen-Mother. The husband and wife, having thus both satisfied *les convenances*, by openly expressing the wish to fly to each other's arms, were as usual enjoying themselves with their love-affairs while living apart.

Marguerite was now the better able to follow her own sweet will as to the manner in which she chose to conduct herself, owing to the fact that she had recently contrived to get rid of her enemy, Du Guast, by means of his assassination.

This *mignon* of the King had been slaughtered in his bed one night by several armed men, at the head of whom was Guillaume du Prat, Baron de Viteaux.

According to the historians Mézeray, de Thou, and Varillas, followed by Michelet, the Queen of Navarre visited this gentleman in the convent of the Augustins, where he was in hiding, and paid him in advance with her favours for the dastardly deed which she wished him to perform, and in this way became assured of her vengeance upon her deadly enemy, who had recently openly stigmatised her as "the Queen of the courtesans."

The Baron de Viteaux had, in a fair duel, killed Alègre, one of the *mignons* of Henri III., and all of the Court sought to obtain his pardon with the sole exception of Du Guast, who persuaded the King to refuse it. Guillaume du Prat had, however, returned in secret to Paris, and hidden himself in a convent, and here Marguerite came to visit him by night. She recalled to him all the injuries he had received at Du Guast's hands, she told him of her own, those of Bussy d'Amboise, and of her brother, d'Alençor. And, with tears in her eyes,

she called upon him to avenge himself and her at the same time. How could the young Baron de Viteaux refuse a beautiful young Queen in tears, especially when she offered him in advance the recompense of all her loveliness?

The pact was easily arranged then and there between the Queen of Navarre and Guillaume du Prat, and the former did not have to wait long for her vengeance. Although Du Guast usually surrounded himself with an escort of gentlemen, as he was carrying on an intrigue with a lady of the Court, he had close to the Louvre a house next door to that of his fair mistress, a secret door made in the dividing wall enabling them to visit each other at will. To see this lady in the greater secrecy, he was in the habit of sending away all his friends, retaining merely a few *valets de chambre* in his dwelling.

One night, in the winter of 1575, the Baron de Viteaux, with several associates, choosing the moment when Du Guast's friends had just left him, mounted to his apartments, after, it would seem, first killing a couple of his servants below. The assassin left a man or two to guard the door of the antechamber, and, entering Du Guast's room, found him reading in bed. Du Guast had himself boasted how he had found and killed many Huguenots in bed at the time of the Saint-Bartholomew massacre. He was now to experience a similar fate himself.

Running him through with his sword, the Baron du Viteaux hurriedly retired, and, as he left the bedroom, he met the lady whose favours Du Guast enjoyed coming in through the secret door. The avenger of Marguerite de Valois then had the cruelty to wipe his bloody weapon

upon the apron of this young lady. He then made good his escape from Paris, lowering himself over the city wall by a rope, and finding horses waiting all ready to take him to join the army of d'Alençon, who was evidently in the secret of the proposed murder.

Du Viteaux had not killed his victim, however, outright, as Du Guast lived long enough to say that he thought he had recognised his assassin, who, however, was never punished for his crime. There would be a good reason for the King not attempting to punish the assassin of a man who had so openly insulted the Duc d'Alençon as to cut him, and refuse to salute him in the street. Before the "Paix de Monsieur" neither the Baron du Viteaux nor his protector could be reached by the King, while after that peace François had, for the time being at all events, become too strong to be molested.

The way in which Marguerite triumphs in her Memoirs over the death of her enemy is worth recording, so full are her words of the venom and hatred that filled her against Du Guast:

"The King received him [d'Alençon] with honour, and Bussy likewise, who arrived in my brother's suite, for Le Guast was by this time dead, having been killed by a judgment of God as he was following a cure, his body being rotten with every kind of abomination, and given over to the corruption which had long since pursued it, and his soul to the devils to whom he had done homage by magic and all conceivable sorts of wickedness. This instrument of hatred and dissension being removed from the world, and the King's mind wholly set upon the destruction of the Huguenots, and the desire to be helped in this by my brother, so that he and they might become

eternally at cross-purposes, and as the King, for these reasons, wished to prevent me from joining the King, my husband, he showered all kinds of caresses upon my brother and myself, so that we should be contented to remain at the Court."

The new war in which d'Alençon took part against his former ally and sometime rival, the King of Navarre, took place in 1577, but before it broke out François had picked up the threads of his old liaison with Madame de Sauve, when, owing to the absence of his brother-in-law, he was able to bask undisturbed in the smiles of this corrupt woman. During the recent civil war Bussy had signalised himself by an action worthy of his character, and one calculated to enhance the glory of the Princess to whom he openly professed his chivalric devotion. Having vanquished a certain captain, named Page, in single combat, Bussy was about to despatch him, when the vanquished gentleman conceived the happy thought of recommending himself to the lady of his conqueror's thoughts. "Thereupon," says Brantôme, "Bussy, struck to the heart by the saying, replied, 'Go then, seek through the world the most beautiful princess and lady in the universe, throw thyself at her feet and thank her, and tell her that Bussy has spared thy life for love of her.' And that was done."

Marguerite was, however, ere long to lose for ever the services of the valiant and disreputable Bussy d'Amboise, a young noble who, while continuing to be the terror of the Court, where he was constantly killing the King's *mignons*, was by no means faithful to his Royal mistress. His arrogance became at length so great that, not only Henri III. hated and feared him more than ever, but eventually the love which d'Alençon had formerly shown

him turned to hate likewise, owing to his impudence. Various organised attempts were made to kill the champion by the King's minions, four or five together, and especially was he the object of detestation of the young Seigneur de Quelus, with whom he had various passages of arms. In one of these, Quelus, with Saint-Luc, d'O, and Saint-Mesgrin, all on horseback, charged Bussy and a gentleman with him, unexpectedly, but he came off unhurt as usual. This Saint-Mesgrin was, by-the-bye, assassinated a short time later by the orders of the Duc de Guise, who found him upon too friendly terms with his wife.

In the above-mentioned skirmish Lestoille remarks that Bussy showed great courage and resolution in defending himself, and fought with his usual gaiety of heart.

The King, fearing for the life of his favourite Quelus, summoned Bussy before him, and ordered the long-standing quarrel to be made up. "With all my heart," exclaimed Bussy. "I will even kiss him, Sire." And, before the astonished Quelus knew what was going to happen, he threw both his arms around the King's *mignon* and kissed him with a comic embrace, like that of a pantaloon in a pantomime, which absurd action made all the courtiers laugh, in spite of the King's presence. Eventually d'Alençon was compelled to send Bussy away from the Court, and he was given the post of Governor of the Citadel of Angers. This was after the invincible Louis de Clermont had killed yet two more of the King's *mignons* in duels, in the autumn of 1577.

Although the citadel of Angers was a magnificent fortress, which had been built by Saint-Louis to resist the incursions of the Bretons and Normans, it was with



LOUIS DE CLERMONT D'AMBOISE, SEIGNEUR DE BUSSY
(From a portrait in the Château de Beauregard)

considerable difficulty that, in spite of the King's anger, Bussy could be induced to leave the Court. When at length he did do so, he took away with him one of the Queen-Mother's ladies, named Julita Guadagnini, whom he called one of his *petites maîtresses*, to distinguish her from his *grandes maîtresses*, who were Princesses or great ladies of the Court.

It is probable that the Queen-Mother allowed this young Italian to follow Bussy for reasons of her own, in order to be a spy upon his movements, for such indeed she became.

After various adventures, during one of which Bussy with his followers ravaged and pillaged in peace time a couple of the King's provinces, he fell in love with, or perhaps it would be more correct to say he won the love of, a young married lady. This was the seventeen-year-old Diane de Bertheret, the wife of the Comte de Monsoreau, whose seat was the fine old Château de Constancières, six miles from Angers.

After the liaison with this young girl, who had been dazzled with the brilliancy of Bussy d'Amboise, had lasted some little time, the neglected *petite maîtresse* Julita sent word to Catherine de Médicis, who informed the King in turn.

Henri III. was delighted—at last he had obtained the long-wished-for opportunity of vengeance upon his brother's insolent favourite. The King told the Comte de Monsoreau, then present at the Court, that he was being deceived, and advised him to go off at once, with a large body of men, to his castle, to surprise and massacre the betrayer of his honour.

Bussy was surprised accordingly, one night, in the boudoir of the young Comtesse, when he fought with

the gallantry of a lion. Although attacked by relays of men, by six at a time, he slaughtered about a dozen of his assailants, including the Comte de Monsoreau. After his sword was broken he severely wounded several more with the leg of a table, but was eventually killed while endeavouring to make good his escape by a window.

CHAPTER XIV

Henri in Love, Marguerite Arrested

1577—1578

It was at about this period that the Duc Henri de Guise, at the head of the ultra-Catholic party, first commenced the organisation of the celebrated League which, under him and his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, proved to be such a terrible thorn in the side of Henri III. during the remainder of his reign.

It was in order to assist his brother-in-law, the King, against the League, which was greatly aided by Spain, that, many years later, Henri de Navarre joined his Huguenot troops to the attenuated Royal forces. Again, after the death of Henri III., it was while fighting against the armies of the League that the King of Navarre, having become Henri IV. of France, won those celebrated victories which have made his name for ever famous.

The antagonism between the House of Bourbon and that of Guise was indeed in no manner less marked than that between the Guise and the Valois. Although Henri IV., by a combination of tact and bribery, was, after administering to him various good trouncings, eventually able to bring the Duc de Mayenne over to his side, he was never but once heard to say a word approbatory of Henri de Guise. This, however, according

to Lestoille, he did when he learned that this Prince had caused the open murder of the *mignon* Saint-Mesgrin for making too free with his wife, the former Princesse de Porcien. Henri de Navarre then remarked: "I am very grateful to the Duc de Guise, my cousin, for not having been able to allow a bedchamber *mignon* to make a laughing-stock of him. That is the way in which one ought to treat all of these little gallants of the Court, who mix themselves up with approaching the Princesses, to cast sheep's-eyes at them and to make love to them."

Since we find him thus openly approving of the vengeance of his enemy Guise, we can well imagine that Henri did not either spare his jeers and sneers when he heard of the death of his wife's celebrated gallant, Bussy d'Amboise, caught in the end like a rat in a corner of a yard from which there was no escape. Nevertheless, the King of Navarre was at this very time engaged himself in casting sheep's-eyes, which were for a time thrown in vain, at a very pretty and interesting young lady, one of his own subjects. We have mentioned how Henri had regained his sister Catherine from the guardianship or imprisonment which she had been undergoing at the Court of France, and that she had then become a Protestant again, as she had been in her childhood. He now took her off to the Court of Navarre, which its King was in the habit of gathering around him alternately at the two Béarnese capitals, Nérac and Pau. There he appointed, as governess to his sister, now termed "Madame," a lady of noble birth, Madame de Tignonville.

This lady had a young and beautiful daughter, Jeanne, for whom her amorous King was soon sighing full blast with all the fury of a furnace. The girl, however, was

virtuous, or at any rate determined to remain chaste until her marriage. Thereupon Henri vainly imagined that he could employ his faithful follower and watch-dog, d'Aubigné, to overcome the young lady's scruples. He had, however, got hold of the wrong man ; there were not many things that d'Aubigné would not do in peace or war to oblige the King of Navarre, but to play the rôle of Mercury to his Jove was not one of them. Accordingly, in spite of prayers and menaces, and likewise various bad turns which the malicious Henri played his servant, the gallant d'Aubigné remained most obstinately incorruptible ; and we honour him accordingly, as being a man of far more principle than his master.

Agrippa d'Aubigné relates in his *Mémoires* this episode of the Gascon King, with one of whom the Duc de Sully also speaks, and who is called in that lively satire, the *Confession de Sancy*, by the familiar name of *La petite Tignonville*. We will quote the worthy historian.

"Thence the King of Navarre made his journey into Gascony. Thereupon the young King, having commenced his amours with the young Tignonville, who, as long as she remained a maid, virtuously resisted, the King sought to employ Aubigné in the matter, having asserted, as a certain fact, that to him nothing was impossible.

"He, however, vicious enough in great matters, and who perhaps might, from caprice, not have refused this service to a companion of his own, revolted so greatly against the name of 'pander,' which he looked upon as a beggarly vice, that neither the excessive caresses nor the infinite prayers of his master, which went so far as to join his hands upon his knees before him, could move him in the least.

"Malice then pushed the King, his master, to make him all sorts of quarrels, to prevent him from getting his pay, and even to keep his clothes, so as to reduce him to want."

So far did the love-sick Henri go, and even farther, but all was of no avail. Of all those at the Court of Navarre whom d'Aubigné detested, he most hated Fervacques, the traitor who had betrayed the plan of Henri's proposed escape from Senlis to the King. The Béarnais now pretended to take the side of Fervacques against d'Aubigné, but even this had no effect. Upon another occasion d'Aubigné, having been with Henri in a midnight brawl, in which he was compelled to draw his sword to protect his master, this latter subsequently endeavoured to move d'Aubigné, by meanly representing to him that he was, after all, the companion of his debauches, and therefore ought not to refuse him the service demanded. But still, and in spite of everything, the author of the *Mémoires* remained unmoved and absolutely inflexible.

In the meantime Jeanne de Tignonville remained on her side equally inflexible, until the King of Navarre having provided her with a husband in the person of François, Baron de Pardaillan, Comte de Pangeas, she considered that her reputation was no longer at stake, and yielded to her Sovereign's desires.

At last, then, the King of Navarre was successful in attaining the object of his passion, apparently with no opposition on the part of Jeanne's husband, who, with the usual facility of the husbands of those days in the presence of Royalty, doubtless eclipsed himself until the fickle fancy of the young King had been enchained elsewhere. After that period had arrived, we find the Comte

de Pangeas, whom the Princess Catherine scornfully called "that great buffalo of a Pangeas," doing all in his power to aid the King of Navarre, in a matter which concerned this young lady. This was when Charles de Bourbon, Comte de Soissons, the younger brother of the Prince de Condé, endeavoured to marry his fair cousin, after Henri de Navarre had withdrawn the consent which he had formerly given to this match with his sister. De Pangeas then effectually prevented the marriage between the pair, who loved each other devotedly, by threatening to put the young Prince of the Blood under arrest. De Soissons was forced to leave Béarn, while threatening to kick the Comte de Pangeas down-stairs on the first opportunity. This was a threat which he subsequently most effectually carried out in a palace. But the young Prince never won his lady-love, while the husband of *la petite Tignonville* won, if nothing else, the gratitude of the King of Navarre, who forcibly married his almost heart-broken sister to the Duc de Lorraine et Bar.

While Henri was philandering with "la Tignonville" in his Court at Pau, and François philandering with "la Sauve" in Paris, events suddenly took an unfavourable turn for this latter at the Louvre. D'Alençon had, as we said, grown to dislike Bussy almost as much as he had formerly cherished him, and had therefore consented to his favourite's banishment from the Court. The cause for the estrangement between this worthy couple was a puerile one. François one day insisted upon making Bussy join him in a foolish game, which consisted in seeing which could say the most insulting things to the other. The Prince having made use of some very opprobrious expressions concerning Bussy, this latter capped it by replying: "Well, as for you, I would not even take you

for my dog-keeper ; you are far too ugly ! " This ended this entertaining game, and François, who, as the result of small-pox, was indeed, as he knew, far from good-looking, could not have been more insulted than by this remark, and never forgave it. He was, however, very sorry for himself when Bussy d'Amboise, whose sword had ever been his defence, had been forced to withdraw from the Louvre ; for then, with the King's connivance, the insolence of the *mignons* to Monsieur knew no bounds.

One night at a ball, upon the occasion of a wedding at the Louvre, they not only talked so loudly that he could but hear them of d'Alençon's mean appearance, but even trod on his toes as if by accident. Furious at these insults, which he knew to be instigated by his brother, the King, d'Alençon declared to Catherine de Médicis that he would instantly withdraw himself from a Court where the heir to the throne could, with impunity, be treated with such unveiled contempt.

To allow his brother to depart, probably to raise the country once more against him, did not at all suit the King's book. When informed by his mother that François intended to retire to Saint-Germain on the morrow, Henri III., being stirred up by the *mignons*, became in a furious rage with his brother. Rising in the middle of the night, he went in his dressing-gown to find the Queen-Mother ; telling her that the State was in danger, and that he was going to seize his brother's person and search through all his effects. Henri III. then marched off with M. de Losse, the Captain of the Scottish Guard, and some Scotch archers, to d'Alençon's chamber.

Fearing lest the King should murder his brother, the

old Queen rose from her bed, threw on her dressing-gown, and accompanied her son.

Knocking violently at his brother's door, Henri demanded instant admission, and, once inside, began to abuse him furiously, while causing the archers to carry off all his boxes and articles of furniture to be searched for treasonable papers. The King himself rummaged through his brother's bed, in which he was, for incriminating documents. As it happened, François had gone to sleep with a *billet-doux* from Madame de Sauve under his pillow. This he tried to hide, but the King fought with him for it, and, being assisted, took it from him by force. Vainly now did the young Prince beg his brother not to read it, and vow that the papers contained nothing treasonable. Henri III. insisted upon opening the letter, with Catherine de Médicis, when the King and his mother were both very confused at its contents.

This only augmented the King's rage, and he therefore gave the Duc d'Alençon under the charge of Jean de Losse and the archers of the Scottish Guard, and left him.

This irruption into François' chamber took place at one in the morning, and the Queen of Navarre, in her description of the letter scene, takes care to air her erudition by dragging in an amusing reference to Roman history. She declares that the King and Queen-Mother were as much embarrassed as was Cato, when, having obliged Cæsar, in the Senate, to display the paper which had been brought to him, and which he declared was something affecting the welfare of the Republic, it turned out to be a love-letter which the sister of this very Cato had addressed to him.

In spite of the unfriendly feeling lately existing

between Bussy d'Amboise and his master, this dare-devil gallant had recently arrived in Paris in disguise, and was hidden in the Louvre, partly, no doubt, in order to carry on his amour with the Queen of Navarre, and partly to confer in secret with d'Alençon upon the subject of the army which the young Prince was endeavouring to raise at this time for the invasion of Flanders—although against his brother's wishes.

Henri III., having given orders to arrest the Duc d'Alençon's personal attendants, the Sieur de Larchant, Captain of the Guards, went up to the apartment of the Duc's Chamberlain, Jean de Simier, a gentleman not celebrated for his excess of courage. De Larchant, having arrested Simier, who was in a terrible fright, was retiring with his prisoner. He had a shrewd idea that Bussy was somewhere not far away, but the pair had been friends from the time of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, and so he did not want to find him.

At that time de Larchant, taking advantage of the general confusion, in which many who were not Huguenots were intentionally murdered, had contrived to get rid of the step-father and two half-brothers of the handsome Mademoiselle de la Chataigneraie. By this means the young lady, with whom de Larchant had a secret understanding, became a rich heiress, and he married her.

The Captain of the Guards had then given to Bussy the counsel of likewise slaughtering his cousin, Antoine de Clermont, the half-brother of the Prince de Porcien, with whom Bussy had a lawsuit for the Marquisate of Renel and the territories thereto appertaining. Louis de Clermont took this advice, but it was in a duel, in which his unhappy cousin Antoine fought in his night-

shirt, that Bussy killed him, upon that dreadful night of August 24th, 1572.

Owing to the bond of blood thus formerly established between the Captain of the Guards and Louis de Clermont, the former was by no means anxious to put his friend in the power of the infuriated King, and endeavoured to get away without allowing the soldiers with him to discover him if he should happen to be concealed anywhere at hand.

It did not, however, suit the indomitable Bussy to be left behind; thus he determined to be arrested too, thinking, no doubt, that it might very possibly go worse with him should he fall into other hands. Suddenly, therefore, Bussy's head was thrust out from behind the curtains of Simier's bed, and a jocular voice heard crying out: "Hola! father Larchant; what, are you going off without me? Don't you, then, esteem my conduct as honourable as that of that hang-dog of a Simier?"

"Would to God," exclaimed Larchant, "that he might have deprived me of an arm rather than that I should have found you here!"

Bussy replied: "My father, that is merely a sign that matters are going well with me." And he went off as a prisoner, laughing and jeering the whole time at his fellow-prisoner, Simier, for his pitiable and cast-down appearance, although his own risk of losing his head was by far the greater of the two.

Bussy and Simier were, however, both set at liberty when, some little time later, the Duc d'Alençon was himself released from confinement.

To return, however, to the night of the arrest. It is on account of the circumstances that then took place that the contemporaries of Marguerite de Valois are

unanimous in regarding the relation between that young Princess and the Duc d'Alençon as not having been one that should have existed between a brother and sister.

François, left alone with M. de Losse and the Scottish archers, inquired anxiously from the former what had been done to his sister, for he was sure that if he was in disgrace she would be in the same plight. Upon receiving the reply that the Queen of Navarre was at present in safety, François replied in a self-sufficient manner which showed how very sure he was of his sister's affections.

"It is a great relief to my distress to know that my sister is free, but, even if she be so, I am assured that she loves me so greatly that she would rather be a prisoner with me than live in freedom without me." He then, without first sending to inquire from Marguerite her wishes on the subject, sent M. de Losse to demand the Queen-Mother to beg the King to allow the Queen of Navarre to come and share his captivity with him, which permission was granted.

Accordingly, at the break of day, Marguerite, while still sleeping, was suddenly aroused by the curtains of her bed being drawn, while the head of a Scottish archer appeared between them. Speaking with a broad Scotch accent, this man said tersely: "*Bon jour*, Madame. Monsieur your brother begs you to come and see him."

The astonished Marguerite, but half awake, asked this man, whom she thought she recognised, if he did not belong to the Scottish Guard.

Upon his answering yes, that was so, the young Queen asked, "Well, had he got no other messenger to send me but you?"

The honest Scot said no, there was nobody left to

the Duc d'Alençon, and related what had passed during the night. He was most friendly, and whispered in Marguerite's ear: "Do not upset yourself. I can manage to save your brother, and will do so, but I shall have myself to go off with him."

Marguerite huddled on her clothes as fast as she could, and the archer took her off with him to her brother's chamber. As the Queen of Navarre was compelled to cross the big courtyard of the Louvre, full of people, she noticed that all those who usually bowed down to her, now seeing her in misfortune, turned their backs upon her.

Upon her arrival in François' chamber her brother tenderly kissed her and addressed her, so Marguerite says, as follows: "Oh, my Queen, dry your tears, for your affliction is the only thing that distresses me. . . . My only fear is that, being unable to bring about my death, they may make me languish in a long imprisonment; but even then I shall despise their tyranny if only you will grant me the favour of your company."

Marguerite replied, through her sobs, that God alone should prevent her from bearing him company, whatever his fate might be, and that if he were to be removed from her she would kill herself on the spot. From which remark it will be noticed that the Queen of Navarre loved her brother very much.

The affectionate brother and sister were not kept long in confinement, before Catherine de Médicis, fearing the effect throughout the Kingdom of their imprisonment, persuaded the King to release them,

An amusing incident occurred before their release, when they inquired from a very grave and solemn young gentleman, sent to them by the King, why they

were thus detained. This Groom of the Chambers, named de Combaut, answered grandly that "Gods and Kings did all for a good purpose, and their actions must not be questioned."

Thereupon, Marguerite remarks that, but for her brother's laughter, she would have given this grandiloquent young fellow the dressing-down that he deserved.

CHAPTER XV

Marguerite's Manœuvres

1577

If anything were wanted to show how deeply Marguerite was mixed up in her brother's continual plots, the proof was supplied by the anxiety that François had displayed as to his sister's fate as soon as he had himself been placed under arrest.

Not long after their mutual release from close confinement, as the doors of the Louvre were still closed to him, François determined to escape from the intolerable existence he was forced to lead, and his sister resolved to assist him in so doing. He had the more reason for anxiety as the behaviour of Henri III. was so uncertain that it seemed quite possible that the *mignons*, who hated Monsieur, might at any moment cause him to be put to death, by poison or other means.

To facilitate her brother's evasion Marguerite managed to procure a long rope, which was introduced into the Louvre in the box of a lute which she had sent out to be repaired. Late one winter's night Marguerite, with three of her women and the young fellow who had brought in the rope, attached the cord to the window,

which was situated at a great height above the dry moat of the Louvre.

François, with his attendants Simier and Cangé, had secretly gained Marguerite's apartment. Of these three, while the former was not in the least alarmed, Simier was all pale and trembling at the idea of attempting the perilous descent. Laughing and joking, d'Alençon bade his sister farewell and went down the rope first, reaching the bottom in safety ; then Simier followed, who nearly fell from fear, and lastly Cangé the *valet de chambre*. No sooner had all escaped than Marguerite's women attempted to burn the long rope, when it made such a blaze that in a few minutes the guards came knocking at the door, crying out that the chimney of the Queen of Navarre's room was on fire.

The rope had as yet been only half consumed, and it was with difficulty that the frightened ladies succeeded in keeping out the guards, by declaring that the Queen was asleep and must on no account be disturbed. These women insisted that they could perfectly well extinguish the fire themselves.

François had fled, in the first instance, to the convent of Sainte-Geneviève, and thence, through a hole made in the wall, escaped from the city. Happy in her brother's freedom, Marguerite went to bed in earnest when all remains of the rope had at length disappeared ; but it was not long before she, as usual where her brother's escapes were concerned, was called upon to "face the music" once more.

M. de Losse arrived to summon her on behalf of the King and the Queen-Mother. With the consent of the fugitive, the Abbot of the convent, Joseph Foulon by name, had, as soon as he was certain that Monsieur

had got clean away, come to warn the King, declaring that he had himself acted under force in the matter and was not to blame.

The Captain of the Scottish Guards found Marguerite in her bed, from which she must by this time have become accustomed to be summoned upon disagreeable occasions. She merely threw on her dressing-gown, and was leaving with M. de Losse, when one of her frightened women indiscreetly seized hold of her robe, and commenced to shriek and cry out that her mistress would never return alive. M. de Losse angrily repulsed this woman, while telling Marguerite that it was lucky that no one but himself had heard what she said, but that he would not betray her.

Henri III. was seated by his bedside, in such a furious temper that he had almost lost all knowledge of his actions. Marguerite, while relating this incident, gives us in her Memoirs a lengthy disquisition, to the effect that she would not tell her mother a lie on any account, "not even to escape a thousand deaths"; and yet merely a few sentences farther on we find her convicting herself of telling a lie most effectually. For she declared to the King and her mother that, in the matter of his departure, her brother "had deceived me in that, like them." Needless to remark that this truth-loving Princess quite forgot to add any particulars with reference to any rope or to a certain chimney which had been on fire.

Marguerite, having exonerated herself, proceeded to make use of her clever tongue to plead her brother's cause, and to convince the angry and suspicious King that François' departure would bring about no change in his allegiance, and, further, that this departure, of which she had known nothing, could only have been

in order to arrange matters for his proposed expedition into Flanders.

The King and his mother, finding that they could get nothing else out of this intelligent Princess, who was too clever for them, pretended to be convinced by her words, especially when she said that she would answer for them with her life.

The Queen of Navarre was accordingly allowed to return to her bed, nor was M. de Losse or any other Scottish archer sent to summon her thence any more in the course of her history. We shall, however, find her, upon yet one more occasion, being called upon to rise unexpectedly; but it was from a bed a long way from Paris, and for a very different purpose than that of any of the three occasions which have already been recorded in the career of this Princess.

Although, strange to relate, history does not record the fact of the means by which François had escaped ever becoming known to the King, we cannot but feel convinced that a woman as cunning as Catherine de Médicis would leave no stone unturned until she had got at the bottom of that matter, which, with so many people in the secret, must indeed soon have remained no secret at all.

Probably in less than a week after the departure of d'Alençon both Catherine and the King had learned quite sufficient about the business of the rope to know how much reliance could be placed upon the word of the Queen of Navarre. But, if so, no notice was taken of the matter at the time, although Henri III. probably treasured the circumstance up in his mind for use, with a few other details, upon a future occasion.

Upon the morrow of François' perilous descent of

the castle walls, a pretty plain-spoken letter arrived from him to his brother. In it he informed the King: "I could do no less than withdraw myself from such slavery, to escape the danger to my life, having been plainly warned that four days later a retreat would have been ready for me in the Bastille, while awaiting a conclusion after the fashion of the methods of Cæsar Borgia."

In spite of this letter, the Queen-Mother flattered herself that she would be able to persuade the erring lamb to return once more to the shelter of the sheep-fold. Accordingly, taking a few of her ladies with her, of whom one was doubtless Madame de Sauve, she left Paris, to persuade François how much more comfortable and safe he would be within the walls of the Louvre, where his loving brother was longing to welcome him, than in his fortified town of Alençon or elsewhere surrounded by an army.

Exactly with what words of welcome Catherine de Médicis was received by her youngest son we do not know; but she returned from Angers, where she left him safely ensconced with Bussy and a number of troops, in the worst of ill-humour. She had indeed been very shabbily treated for such a great Queen, and could not get over the fact that it was merely Bussy d'Amboise who had come to meet her, and not her son, who had pretended that he had hurt his leg, and even forced her to enter the Castle of La Châtre by a little side-door, instead of the grand entrance. Catherine declared angrily, upon her return to Paris, that it was the first time in her life that she had ever been compelled to pass through a "guichet"; but, as she had undergone various other experiences since the time of her marriage at the age of fourteen, and survived them, let us hope that the Floren-

tine profited also by being taught for once to feel like an ordinary individual when entering a doorway.

While the Duc d'Alençon was continuing to organise his expedition for Flanders, raising troops from all the territories in the three or four Duchies of his appanage, new troubles had arisen with reference to the King of Navarre. Now, far from demanding the wife who had been refused him, he declared that he did not want her back at all. Henri, in fact, was playing a game, while thus assuming the rôle of a husband violently irritated against his spouse and openly refusing to allow her to come and rejoin him. Outwardly complaining of the uncomfortable *ménage* they had formerly led together at the Court, he further alleged the many suspicions which he had had of her improper behaviour. While making this outcry, Henri de Navarre was secretly corresponding with Marguerite on very friendly terms ; and she was replying just as amiably, while all the time trying hard to patch up the quarrel between her husband and her brother François.

Catherine de Médicis was not deceived by all this pretence of a marital quarrel. She saw through Marguerite upon this occasion, and informed the King, by letter, that her daughter was doing all in her power to bring her son and son-in-law together again, and to arrange a friendly meeting between them as soon as possible. This, above all things, was what the King wished to prevent, so he changed his methods with his sister, loaded her with caresses, and sought at the same time to detach her from Henri de Navarre and from d'Alençon.

The escape of this latter had taken place in January 1578, but in the previous year this devoted sister had done her brother notable service.

During the period of the short war in which François had borne a leading part against the Huguenots, Marguerite had felt that her position at a Court at war with her husband was unbecoming. Then, upon the pretence of accompanying her elderly cousin, the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon to Spa, to be cured of the remains of erysipelas, she made a journey which was a combination of politics and gallantry upon her part. Before her departure for Belgium in considerable state, François passed several days with her, instructing his sister as to the good offices which he desired her to do for him while making her progress through the various provinces of Flanders, then under the Viceroyalty of the brilliant Don Juan of Austria on behalf of Spain. Don Juan was the natural son of the Emperor Charles V., and therefore the half-brother of Philip II. of Spain. While, by some of his contemporaries, this famous hero of the battle of Lepanto was supposed to be the son of one of the great Emperor's own sisters, others declared his mother to be a young lady of Ratisbon named Barbara Blomberg. Whoever his mother may have been, the young Prince was of most noble bearing, he was of medium height, with well-knit frame, of beautiful countenance and admirable grace. He had already seen, and greatly admired, the Queen of Navarre in Paris, and she accordingly looked forward to the exercise of the charm of her seductions upon him with pleasant anticipations. These were scarcely realised when at last they met, as Don Juan, recognising in Marguerite a fair foe who would, on her brother's behalf, jockey him out of the dominions over which he ruled, kept his affections well in hand, and would not allow them to obtain the upper hand of his discretion.

Plenty of other conquests, however, fell to the share

of the fair Marguerite during this expedition, when she, in the flower of her beauty of twenty-four years, according to Ste-Beuve, "passed on her way gaining hearts, seducing the Governors of citadels and arranging various useful perfidies."

The fair young Queen, followed by the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon, a lady of honour, and ten noble young ladies on horseback, and many other ladies and women in coaches or chariots, herself travelled in a gorgeous litter, which we can only imagine to have been drawn by horses or mules from the description she gives of it. "I journeyed in a litter, fashioned with pillars, lined inside with rose-coloured Spanish velvet, embroidered in gold, and having shot-silk hangings ornamented with various devices. The sides were of glass, each pane of which was covered with designs, so that there were as many as forty different ones, which had mottoes in Spanish and Italian concerning the sun and its influences."

After bidding his sister farewell, d'Alençon went off to join the Royal Army before La Charité on the Loire, and upon the very day of her departure, May 28th, 1577, François laid siege to the town of Issoire, held by the Huguenots. Both La Charité and Issoire were taken by him, pillaged, sacked, and burned. The latter, in a most treacherous manner, was taken by assault while the inhabitants were parleying for a surrender, when the unfortunate women and girls of the place underwent cruel outrage at the hands of d'Alençon's ruffianly soldiery.

Another army under Honoré de Savoie, Marquis de Villars, a great noble who had become Admiral of France in succession to the unfortunate Coligny, was opposed to Henri de Navarre in the south. But, while the King of Navarre surprised Eauze, and made a most gallant



MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

attempt to take Marmande by assault, Villars, in spite of treachery within, utterly failed in his attempt upon Henri's northern capital of Nérac.

Leaving all horrible scenes of war to one side, however, Marguerite commenced her pleasant journey through Picardy, all in the fair summer-time, and continued it on to Cambray, then ruled by an independent Bishop, merely under the protection of Spain. Marguerite had reached Catelet, a few miles distant, when the Bishop sent a messenger to inquire when she would leave that place in order that he might come and meet her. The Queen of Navarre had, however, in her head an appointment with some one better than a Bishop ; no one less, in fact, than her old lover Henri de Guise, who not long since had received, in the battle of Dormans, the bad arquebus wound in the face from the scar of which he was afterwards known as *Le Balafré*. A fortunately planned carriage accident delayed the pleasure-seeking Princess for a night in the inn at Catelet, and there she gave the order for the admission to her chamber of a gay cavalier, who, from the condition of one side of his face, would seem to be suffering from erysipelas out of sympathy with the giddy young Queen with whom he had a rendezvous.

It is needless to say that this is one of the many little secrets of her journey which the fair sinner did not think it necessary to record in the prettily turned phrases of the journal which she dedicated to Brantôme. The chroniclers of the day were not, however, so discreet, and the relation of this assignation with the best beloved lover of Marguerite's girlish days will be found set forth in the *Bulletin de la Société Académique de Laon*, vol. xiv., 1864.

Leaving Guise and the delights of love the next day,

the Queen of Navarre was welcomed by Louis de Berleymont, Bishop of Cambray, in great style. This worthy prelate was, however, so much afraid of falling a prey to the seductions of this Royal siren that, although he gave a great ball in her honour, he went to bed himself, leaving her to exercise her wiles upon the Seigneur d'Inchy, who succumbed at once. He was the Governor of Cambray, and eventually sold the place to d'Alençon, as a result of his infatuation for his sister.

At Valenciennes, and at Mons, the Queen of Navarre won greater triumphs, completely winning over the powerful Comte de Lalain, Grand Bailli de Hainault, his Comtesse, his brother and many young nobles, by her beauty, her tact, and her smiles. And thus she went on, being fêted at one place after the other, while, after first feeling her ground carefully, she cautiously opened her mind to the various Flemish Governors of cities and districts throughout the Viceroyalty of Don Juan, thus paving the way for the advent of d'Alençon as their ruler, and for his friendly reception.

At length Don Juan came to meet the Queen in person, and, after Marguerite had saluted this amiable Prince, now thirty-two years of age, with a friendly kiss, he rode by the side of her litter to the town of Namur, where he entertained her most royally with all kinds of festivities.

Upon a former occasion Don Juan, who was very susceptible to female beauty, had spoken of the Queen of Navarre in the most extravagant terms; saying that he placed her "far above the Italian and the Spanish ladies, notwithstanding that her beauty, more divine than human, was more calculated to damn the souls of men than to save them."

In spite of his former enthusiasm, while lodging Marguerite in a set of apartments most wondrously furnished with golden and silver embroideries formerly presented to him by the Grand Vizier of Turkey, Don Juan obstinately refused to make love to her. On the other hand, all of his Spanish captains were at her feet, and even made a song about the Queen of Navarre, to the effect that the conquest of such a beauty was worth more than a kingdom.

From Namur the journey was continued in magnificent barges down the river Meuse, through the territories of the Bishop of Liège to that city. He was a prelate who received with the greatest kindness this fair traveller, supposed to be journeying to Spa in search of the health of which she already possessed a superabundance. He likewise, a little later, assisted her to escape from the Low Countries, when she found that she had put her head into a hornet's nest from which she would have great difficulty in withdrawing it without serious damage. To Don Juan, however, she had said farewell for ever, although, before Marguerite had regained French soil, the son of Charles V. showed an anxiety to see her again which she by no means shared. This was after Henri III., wishing to damage d'Alençon's cause, had spitefully and treacherously informed the brother of Philip II. of the real object of his sister's journey to his dominions.

Don Juan was not to be fated to live for long after the escape of the Queen of Navarre, first from Liège and then from the troops which he sent to arrest her, as she was continuing a flight full of adventure, and during which she lost the wonderful litter, which had been the admiration of all beholders. He died in the autumn of 1578, and was supposed to have been poisoned by the

orders of his brother, Philip II., whose jealousy of his brilliant qualities and popularity had rendered him full of hatred and suspicion.

Marguerite had remained for six weeks at Liège, to which place she and the Princesse de la Roche-sur-Yon had caused the waters of Spa to be brought to them daily, before she received the intelligence which compelled her to fly. This was that the King, her brother, bitterly regretted having allowed her to make this journey to Flanders, and that, out of hatred to d'Alençon, it was arranged that she was to be seized on her return, either by the Spaniards or by the Huguenots, who now loathed her brother François, who had been formerly their friend.

Eventually, owing to her own tact, combined with a certain amount of good fortune, she escaped from endless perils, and won her way through to her own castle and estate of La Fère, in Picardy. The only melancholy event to mar her pleasure, before she left Liège, had been the tragic death, from a broken heart, of one of the most amiable young ladies of her suite, named Mademoiselle de Tournon.

Her lover, the Marquis de Varambon, who had previously sought her hand, had, for some inexplicable reason, refused to speak to this young lady when he had again met her at Namur. He relented of his conduct, and followed the Queen of Navarre to Liège, determined once more to demand the hand of his former love. While riding down the main street of the town, Varambon was blocked by a crowd watching a funeral procession. Seeing a bier and a white sheet covered with garlands of flowers, the Marquis inquired who it was that was about to be buried, and why the funeral attracted so much attention.

Upon receiving, for reply, that it was one of the Queen of Navarre's maids of honour, and that her name was Mademoiselle de Tournon, the guilty lover fell in a swoon from his horse, and remained for long in a state of insensibility. Upon his recovery, learning that he it was who, by his unpardonable cruelty, had been the cause of the death of this poor girl, after all the obstacles which had previously separated them had been removed, this unhappy young man suffered for a second time the pains of death, as he richly deserved.

By the time that Marguerite reached La Fère, a new peace had been concluded with the Huguenots. It was signed at Bergerac on September 17th, 1577, when the King, jealous of the preceding peace having been called the "Paix de Monsieur," insisted upon the new treaty being known by the name of "La paix du Roi."

Immediately after the King's Peace had been arranged, François flew to his sister's arms at La Fère, which, says Marguerite, "was one of the greatest delights that I have ever experienced. . . . The tranquillity of our Court, compared with the other from which he came, rendered the pleasures that he tasted there so sweet that he could not prevent himself from constantly exclaiming: 'Oh, my Queen, how sweet it is to be with you! *Mon Dieu!* this society is a Paradise filled with all sorts of delights, while that which I have left is a hell full of all sorts of furies and torments.'"

The happiness which the Queen of Navarre herself experienced from this sweet companionship is plainly evident from her remark: "We passed nearly two months thus, which seemed to us as only two short days, during which I told my brother of what I had done for him in Flanders."

CHAPTER XVI

Marguerite goes to Navarre

1578

To the student of character, taking into consideration the period in which she lived, Marguerite de Valois—la Reine Margot—can but appear in the light of a remarkable woman. Throughout the course of the sixteenth century we find hardly any others who stand out with her individuality. Neither was this distinction solely due, as in the case of Catherine de Médicis, to her crimes, nor, as in the case of other Royal Princesses who followed her, alone the result of her inborn sensuality, which made of her the slave of her passions from childhood until old age.

In the youngest daughter of Henri II. were to be found united all the gifts, all the faults, of both the House of Orléans and that of Valois. Like her brother Henri III., she possessed the power which enabled her, at will, to assume the attributes of Royalty—the air of command. Of her grandfather, François I., she had inherited the love of glory as well as the vanity, while of his cousin and predecessor, Louis XII., she seemed to share the kindly nature.

From her father, Henri II., Marguerite had inherited various qualities. Among them was that of affability to

her inferiors, but likewise had she received from her parents that extraordinary lightness of character and inconstancy which was so notable an attribute of the Valois race. On the other hand, from various members of the Valois Marguerite had succeeded to a love of the arts and sciences, while she traced back to the poet, Charles, Duc d'Orléans, that facility for versifying which had been possessed in such a remarkable degree by that other Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, the *spirituelle* author of the *Heptameron.*

Nor was the Queen of Navarre devoid of a considerable admixture of the Italian characteristics in her composition. From the cunning Florentine, Catherine de Médicis, it was that she derived a considerable astuteness; like her mother, she was devoid of scruple, and once again, after the fashion of the Médici race, she loved grandeur while being generously inclined. Finally, from Catherine it was that Marguerite had become imbued with the determination to satisfy her desires, no matter what might be the means employed.

With regard to her personal appearance, Brantôme speaks of her beautiful traits, her well-drawn features. He says that her eyes were so transparent and so agreeable that it was impossible to find aught amiss in them. He avers that she had a handsome face on a splendid body, that her figure was the most superb that could be seen, accompanied with the carriage of a goddess and a sedate majesty.

Of the toilette of Marguerite de Valois we find ample descriptions, but we need not refer to them further here than to say that she was the most richly and tastefully attired lady of her day, and that the fashions which she invented were the admiration equally of the Court of

France, by which she was imitated, and of those strangers, some of whom came from foreign lands merely to feast their eyes upon her charms. When the Queen of Navarre eventually left the Louvre, in order to rejoin her husband in his dominions, if we would listen to the chronicler, this attractive Princess was greatly missed in Paris.

"I saw," says Brantôme, "all the courtiers regret her departure as if some great calamity had fallen on their heads. Some said the Court is widowed of its beauty; others the Court has become darkened, it has lost its sun. What had we done that Gascony should come and 'Gasconise' to us, and ravish our beauty from us, to lodge her at a Pau or a Nérac? She was one destined to embellish France and the Court, and the Hôtel de Louvre, Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain, or other fine places of our Kings."

Even while allowing a good deal for the partiality of the devotedly admiring Brantôme, we can, after reading the above eulogium, not do otherwise than believe that, in appearance and personal attraction, Marguerite de Valois must indeed have surpassed all the other great ladies of her day. However much regretted she may have been by those whom she left behind her, the owner of these charms was, in August 1578, at length permitted to set out for Gascony, in order to rejoin her husband, the King of Navarre. Whether he was anxious to see his fair spouse again or not seems a matter of doubt. Lestoille wrote that it was, according to common report, with very great regret that Henri agreed to receive his fickle spouse. Then, thinking better of the matter, Lestoille scratched through this statement in his manuscript. Whatever the facts where Henri de Navarre was con-

cerned, it is evident that not only did Marguerite consider that *les convenances* required her for a time to neglect her brother for her husband, but that Catherine de Médicis and Henri III. had come to look upon the matter in the same light. Moreover, for reasons of her own, to act the part of a spy in the south and to detach, if possible, many important persons from the Protestant cause, the Queen-Mother was herself anxious to pay a visit to Gascony. What excuse could be better than that of escorting her dear daughter to the home of her dear son-in-law?

As the time of departure drew nigh, determined, if possible, once for all to detach Marguerite from d'Alençon, Henri III. did all in his power, by means of large gifts and caresses, to win over to himself the sister who knew only too well how much he hated her. Before leaving for the south Marguerite, however, had insisted upon going to say farewell to her brother, who was then at Alençon. A few days later, in spite of the King placing armed forces to prevent soldiers from joining his brother's standard, François marched off with a force composed of both Catholics and Huguenots into Flanders. There he soon became the master of Hainault, the people having received him willingly; indeed they had called him in order to lower the pride of Spain. His army was, however, nothing but an undisciplined collection of plunderers, and d'Alençon himself an incompetent General, who was not even able to make all of his army accompany him. A part of his troops remained behind on French soil, in Picardy and Champagne, "sacking, pillaging, stealing, violating women and girls, killing, setting fire to houses and barns wherever they passed."

The peasants, however, rose against them, and the Duc de Guise, the Governor of Champagne, by the King's orders, also attacked d'Alençon's pillaging troops, and slaughtered great numbers of them.

Having returned from Alençon in July 1578, Marguerite was met by the King at Olinville, to say farewell to her; and on August 2nd she started on her journey, accompanied by the Queen-Mother, the Cardinal de Bourbon, who was her husband's uncle, the Duc de Montpensier, and Messire Guy de Faur, Sieur de Pibrac. This latter was a Councillor of State and President of the Parliament, and then fifty-four years of age. Pibrac had been appointed to the position of Chancellor to the Queen of Navarre, and he subsequently not only fell in love with her, like everybody else, but befriended her upon various occasions. The worthy Guy du Faur had previously undergone some very disagreeable experiences. He had accompanied Henri III. into Poland, and, upon his flight from Cracow to assume the French monarchy, Pibrac, accompanying his master, had fallen into a bog, in which he had stuck for fifteen hours before assistance came.

According to Mongez, the farewells between Marguerite and her brother were not remarkable for their cordiality. The worthy canon writes: "The separation of the King and the Queen, his sister, far from being accompanied by tears or regrets, was only remarkable for the serene air of the King and the hard words which he addressed to Marguerite. These served to confirm her in her projects of vengeance."

The suite with which Marguerite travelled to Navarre was a regular army. The lists of the various persons, male and female, of which it was composed, as taken

from the "Treasury and receipt-general of the Queen of Navarre," would occupy several pages of small print. The Queen-Mother had a suite equally large, while those of the Cardinal de Bourbon and the Duc de Montpensier were likewise immense.

The journey was followed with very slow degrees across France as far as Cognac. There it would seem, upon crossing the Charente, that the King of Navarre's sphere of influence as Governor of Guyenne was entered, for Marguerite remarks: "As soon as we entered the government of the King, my husband, I was received with a public reception everywhere." Brantôme is enthusiastic about the welcome accorded to the Queen of Navarre at Cognac, where, according to him, "all the beautiful and honest ladies of the country came to make their reverence to the two Queens, who all were ravished with the beauty of this Queen Marguerite." So ravished were they that apparently they were almost intoxicated by her charms, which greatly delighted the Queen-Mother, who then caused Marguerite to dress herself up in her most gorgeous Court apparel, the better to dazzle these country ladies, who thereupon almost lost their wits with astonishment and delight.

Henri de Navarre at length came to meet the two Queens, which he did near the town of La Réole, being accompanied by a splendidly mounted cavalcade of six hundred nobles. This town was held by those "of the religion," and Henri had refused to go any farther, as, although a condition of peace was supposed to exist between him and the King, he was very suspicious of the Maréchal de Biron, the King's Lieutenant, who was with the Queens, and whose authority clashed with his own. There were also several burning open questions;

the Edicts of Tolerance to the Protestants were not enforced by the King, while certain of the cities of surety supposed to be delivered to the Huguenots had not been handed over.

Last, but by no means least, there was the question of Marguerite's dowry, which, in lieu of money, was supposed to consist of a number of cities in Guyenne, Agenais, and Auvergne. These were still garrisoned by the King's troops, instead of being delivered over to the King of Navarre.

There were, accordingly, so many elements of a quarrel existing, likely to be increased rather than diminished, by the presence of Catherine and Biron in the south, that Henri de Navarre was amply justified in exercising caution in the distance to which he should advance to meet his wife and his crafty mother-in-law. It had not, therefore, been without some preliminary negotiation that he had at length consented that the *rencontre* should take place at a solitary house named Castéras, on the road to La Réole.

Here, when the King of Navarre eventually arrived, according to a letter from Catherine to Henri III., the greeting was mutually cordial, at all events outwardly.

"He found me and the Queen of Navarre your sister, your nephew (the Duc de Bar, son of the Duchesse de Lorraine), and my cousins, the Princesses de Condé and de Montpensier. We were waiting for him in a high apartment of the said house. Having saluted us very honestly, and with very good grace, and it seemed to me with very great affection, the Vicomte de Turenne and some of the leaders entered with him. And after the good welcome which you can well imagine we gave him, we talked for a while on common topics.

Then we descended from the said saloon, and he mounted with us in my chariot, and accompanied us here to La Réole.

"He accompanied me to my room, and was willing to conduct your sister, the Queen of Navarre, to his lodging across the street, where they will lodge and sleep together. However, for fear of troubling him, your said sister did not go farther than my lodging; and he, on account of the great heat, having gone to refresh himself, he and she returned to my chamber together, where were my cousins the Cardinal de Bourbon and the Duc de Montpensier."

This meeting took place upon October 2nd, 1578, and Henri, we are informed, kissed his wife a couple of times upon meeting her after nearly three years of separation. So we may conclude that he really was glad to see her again, as otherwise one embrace would have been quite sufficient for the sake of *les convenances*. For three days he remained at La Réole, during which the Queen-Mother assembled one Council after another for the discussion of all the vexed questions between the Huguenots and Catholics.

There was, however, a considerable difficulty about the Maréchal de Biron, as Henri would not consent to meet this tough old soldier on friendly terms; complaining that, in the exercise of his appointment of Lieutenant du Roi, he had unjustly compelled him to evacuate the strong town of Agen. When the King of Navarre first met Biron he spoke to the Maréchal so roughly that the latter became enraged. Catherine de Médicis succeeded in effecting a temporary reconciliation between them, and on the following day, Henri having left them, Marguerite and her mother went

off, in order that the Queen of Navarre should formally take possession of Agen, which was a part of her appanage.

At Agen she was accorded a magnificent reception, and after a few days these two Queens proceeded to Toulouse, where they made a Royal and official entrance, which was of the grandest description. Here the King of Navarre again came to meet them, but did not stay very long, and before leaving he insisted that any further conferences to be held with the Queen-Mother must be held at his northern capital, Nérac.

The Queens travelled about from place to place, Catherine restoring the Catholic religion, at all events officially, wherever she found that it had been banned by the Huguenots.

Coming, on November 23rd, 1578, to join them once more at Auch, a ball was given at which Henri danced most gaily, while his wife was the admiration of all beholders for her grace and beauty. While the festivities were at their zenith a young noble named Armagnac, possibly a distant relative of the Béarnais, who was himself Comte d'Armagnac, arrived, and whispered important tidings into his ear. These were that the Catholics had seized La Réole, which was one of the cities of surety of the Protestants.

The Vicomte de Turenne, who later became Duc de Bouillon, and relates the occurrence, says that he counselled Henri to seize upon the person of the Maréchal de Biron, who was with the Queen-Mother, but that the King of Navarre decided that Biron had too many followers for the attempt to be successful. Instead, he thought of another plan; and, leaving the ball with his followers, went off and surprised the King's town of Fleurance,

near at hand, and held it until Henri III. sent word that La Réole was to be restored.

This curious little act of warfare, which occurred in this time of peace and reconciliation, arose from the direct action of Catherine de Médicis, who had, in her intention to create dissensions among the King of Navarre and his followers, brought with her her Flying Squadron of licentious young ladies. Among these were, of course, Madame de Sauve, also a fair young Greek named Dayelle, who had been rescued some years earlier from the Sack of Cyprus, and, in addition, the Italian Anna d'Aquaviva, commonly nicknamed *La bouffonne d'Atrie*. With this Mademoiselle d'Atrie the elderly Seigneur d'Ussac, Governor of La Réole, had fallen in love while the Court was in that place. The King of Navarre, Turenne, and other young nobles had thereupon made considerable fun of Ussac. In revenge, and instigated by the artful maid of honour, the Governor had first become a Catholic and then given himself and the town to Catherine de Médicis.

When Catherine learned, to her surprise, of Henri's successful counter-stroke by seizing Fleurance, she remarked, while laughing, "I see well that it is the revenge for La Réole, and that the King of Navarre has determined to have cabbage for cabbage; but mine is the best one."

Eventually Marguerite made her State entrance into Nérac, upon December 15th, 1578, when Catherine, in spite of her objection to enter this Protestant stronghold, was compelled to follow her daughter to the capital of Albret.

Nérac was a very pretty place in those days, and the Château, with its lovely gardens, commodious and

comfortable. No sooner were the combined Courts assembled within its walls than love intrigues and amourettes, rather than politics, became the occupation of all therein, whether Protestant or Catholic.

"Love," says the Duc de Sully, in his *Économies royales, Mémoires de Marguerite*, "had become the most serious business of all the courtiers. The mixture of the two Courts, of which neither yielded to the other in affairs of gallantry, produced the effect that might have been expected: all gave themselves up to festivities and fêtes of gallantry. We ourselves," continues this determined old Protestant, "became likewise courtiers, and played the lover like the rest."

The King of Navarre, after having renewed for a short time with Madame de Sauve, fell violently in love with Dayelle; "but," remarks Marguerite, "that did not prevent my receiving plenty of honour and friendship from the King, my husband, who showed me as much of either as I could desire, having told me, upon my first arrival, of all the artifices which had been made when he was at the Court to put us at cross-purposes, and showing great contentment that we should be reunited."

CHAPTER XVII

Marguerite and the Vicomte

1579

Catherine de Médicis had proposed to remain in the south merely for a short time, but for one reason or another she stayed for no less than eighteen months. She is found, at one time, complaining that the eternal negotiations in which she was engaged with the Huguenots were purposely delayed by the King of Navarre and his followers, on account of the delights of love which they were enjoying with the ladies of her suite; but there can be but little doubt that the Queen-Mother was, during her long delay, deliberately endeavouring to make of the fair Greek Dayelle the lure to draw her son-in-law back with her to Paris.

In this design she proved, however, unsuccessful; Henri de Navarre was too cautious again to put his head into the lion's mouth. The wily Catherine was therefore compelled to return to the north without either Henri or her daughter. She took the young Cypriot Dayelle away with her, and after her return to the Court she was married to a Norman gentleman named Jean d'Hemeries, Seigneur de Villars.

Catherine, during her stay in Navarre, was frequently

extremely irritated, owing to the arrogance shown towards her by the Huguenots, who made exorbitant demands upon her. For instance, they insisted upon having no less than sixty new places of surety being placed in their hands. The Queen-Mother then spoke to them "royally and with a very high tone, going so far as to tell them that she would have them all hanged as rebels." Thereupon the Queen of Navarre intervened to smooth matters down, even employing her tears, and at length, by a treaty signed at Nérac at the beginning of 1579, those of "the religion" were granted fourteen additional places of surety.

The worthy Pibrac, Marguerite's Chancellor, owned a most magnificent château in the south, especially famed for the splendour of its furniture. At this Château de Pibrac Gui du Faur entertained the two Queens for a few days most royally, and he was accused by the Catholics of not only having fallen in love with Marguerite but of having allowed her to influence him in favour of those of the Reformed Church in the negotiations. The love of the middle-aged Pibrac for Marguerite was, however, in all probability of but a platonic description. In any case, there seems to have been but little need for the Queen of Navarre to influence him in favour of those of her husband's religion, for the following reason: Henri III. not only confirmed the articles of Nérac without demur upon March 14th, 1579, but he did more than this. Secretly, the King conferred upon the King of Navarre a pension of one hundred thousand livres yearly, with the understanding that he was, if necessary, to rise with all his Huguenots, when called upon, in his assistance against the rebelliously inclined and ultra-Catholic

League, which was daily becoming stronger and which the King already feared.

Henri III. was at this time laughing in his sleeve at all the running about from place to place which was caused by his brother-in-law to the Queen-Mother. While she was all the time vainly endeavouring to catch the wary King of Navarre in her trap, the two brothers-in-law were in secret alliance to upset her plans and plottings.

From this same fear of the League Henri III. was at this time also assisting with money and troops his detested brother François.

According to d'Aubigné, in his *Histoire Universelle*, those eighteen months during which Catherine de Médicis was in the south were merry times for Marguerite and her husband: "The Queen of Navarre had soon polished up all the wits and rusted all the arms.

"She taught the King, her husband [we can hardly believe that he required much teaching !], that a Knight was without a soul when he was without love, and the exercise of that passion that she made herself was by no means concealed, maintaining by this that there was a certain virtue in the public profession of it, while secrecy was the mark of vice. This Prince had very soon learned to caress the servitors of his wife, and she to caress the mistresses of the King, her husband."

Although the malicious d'Aubigné is never too lenient where Marguerite is concerned, there is ample proof of the truth of this last statement, although this mutual connivance of the Royal couple had existed, as we know, even before the King of Navarre had left the Court of France.

During the three and a half years that Marguerite

passed in her husband's restricted dominions—years which she characterises as the happiest period of her life—both the King and Queen of Navarre frequently carried beyond the bounds of all decorum this complaisance towards each other's favourites. In the *Divorce Satyrique*, Henri remarks that at the Louvre he frequently had intentionally kept out of the way of an evening while Bussy d'Amboise was saying good-night to his wife. Now at Nérac or at Pau he makes the statement, or it is made for him, that he was equally careful not to interfere with his Queen's penchant for Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne, who became later Duc de Bouillon and a Maréchal de France, nor with that for Saint-Luc, who was in the habit of coming to see her at Nérac in disguise.

Since Henri, even before the departure of the Queen-Mother, had himself made no secret of his attentions to Madame de Sauve, Dayelle, and a third young lady, Catherine du Luc, it seems scarcely necessary for him to explain his reasons for shutting his eyes to his wife's intrigues in the manner that he does in the *Divorce Satyrique*: "I am perfectly willing to explain my reasons for following this line of conduct. I was a King without a Kingdom, and head of a party which had to be kept up more often than not without troops, and without money wherewith to procure any. Thus, when I saw the storm about to burst over my head, I had no other means of averting it than submission.

"This good lady [Marguerite], such as she is, was not without her uses to me. Consideration for her softened the bitterness both of her mother and her brothers against me. On the other hand, her beauty attracted a quantity of fine fellows, whom her good nature retained in my service, and she would have con-

sidered herself as acting against the interests of our party if she had driven any of them away by a show of undue severity. Judge, then, if it was not necessary for me to allow her her own way (*la ménager*) even if, with her other trickeries, she amused all those who made up to her. There were some, however, who were the objects of her raillery, and I was honoured by the confidence of their ridiculous passion. That old fool Pibrac was one of the number. For love he became her Chancellor, and he coveted this charge in order to have the privilege of writing her the beautiful letters which his tenderness dictated, and of which the perfidious lady made fun with me in secret."

If, in truth, it was really only from interested motives that the Béarnais behaved as he did, it does not tend to improve one's opinion of him in any way. Whatever his wife might have become at the time these words were written, and she had certainly fallen very low in the matter of the selection of her lovers, he might have spared her the imputation of being ready to listen to all comers at an early period in her career, when she was only selecting her favourites from among nobles remarkable for their high lineage or their bravery.

Henri de La Tour belonged to the former class. He was connected by blood with the Bourbons and Catherine de Médicis, and had recently, greatly to the disgust of the king, gone over to the Protestant party.

The Vicomte de Turenne may also be reckoned under the second head, as he was a very distinguished officer in the field, which the King of Navarre, who valued his services highly, well knew. That he was by no means anxious to lose those services when Marguerite had become tired of the Vicomte is made evident

by the manner in which he says that he persuaded Marguerite to restore her lover to her good graces when she had sent him from her side.

"The Huguenots would have had cause to complain if she had found none among them worthy of occupying her for a few days. The Vicomte de Turenne was the first to put himself on the list. He was of good height, a handsome fellow, and at first his appearance charmed her; but he did not come up to her expectations, so she gave him his *congé*. This despairing lover wished to go off to hang himself, and I cannot tell what might have happened if, in the interests of our party, I had not persuaded her to recall him. She had considerable trouble in making up her mind to do so, as her vanity was at stake, and it distressed her to lose the glory of a man of such merit having, like the lover of Anaxarette, hanged himself for her sake."

At this time Henri de Navarre had taken his wife to Pau, a strictly Calvinistic town which Marguerite detested. She had, however, either recovered the golden litter lost in her flight from Flanders or caused another to be made like it.

In this gorgeous conveyance, attended by M. de Turenne, who alone was permitted to ride by her side, the Queen of Navarre was to be seen daily crossing the fields in the neighbourhood of an isolated château near Le Mas d'Agenais. Here, while the knowing ones smiled discreetly, Marguerite was in the habit of repairing to discuss political subjects with the brilliant Henri de La Tour, who alone was allowed to enter the château with the young Queen. Behind the litter, at a distance, while going to or returning from this country house, followed the Queen's pretty maids of honour on mules,

while a score of gentlemen of the house of de La Tour d'Auvergne, clad in orange-coloured velvet with gold and silver embroideries, likewise followed their master the Vicomte and the Princess his mistress.

So dazzled were the simple country folk when they first beheld the glistening golden litter, with its beautiful occupant and the noble cavalier by its side, that they imagined that they beheld the King and the Queen of the fairies, and ran away in affright. It was not long, however, before the good people had learned that what they beheld was but the lovely wife of their King, attended by his cousin, who sought the seclusion requisite to discuss with due decorum high matters of State, having to do with the affairs of the Duc d'Alençon in Flanders.

Henri de Navarre chose to see nothing but what was correct in the daily peregrinations of his wife with one whom he called, in friendly and playful terms, "the great Unhanged," or "Monsieur, the thorough Rascal." It might, therefore, have been imagined that none would have been found bold enough to suggest to him that there were serious reasons why, if he regarded his honour he should put a stop to these pleasant promenades. There was, however, one such, although he lived a long way off the dominions of Navarre, in Paris.

Determined never to lose an opportunity of doing a spiteful ill turn to his sister, Henri III. wrote confidentially to the King of Navarre, and told him that he had better keep an eye upon his wife and the Vicomte de Turenne, for they were behaving shamefully. At the same time he requested his brother-in-law to burn his letter.

Instead, however, of burning the letter, taking it in

his hand, Henri approached his wife and his cousin with it. In the most cheery way, he remarked, "Here, you two! just look at this! Whoever heard of such nonsense? *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* I think that His Majesty must be crazy. But set your minds at rest; I don't believe a word of it; I know you both too well! A good joke, isn't it?" And, gently humming a hunting song, he called for his horse and his hounds, remarking to any courtiers who happened to be at hand that it was a fine day to go a-hunting—for a good long chase.

Thus, once again, did the venom of Henri III. prove unavailing in disturbing the confidence of this accursed brother-in-law in the King's own sister, whom he would fain see strangled if possible. But much might be done with time, and the miserable Henri III. determined that, when the time came, he would put such a spoke in the Queen of Navarre's wheels that even that obstinate fool the Béarnais would no longer be able to prevent her apple-cart from being upset, and that so effectually that never could it run smoothly more.

Thus all went on gaily for a time in the Kingdom of Navarre, where not only was Marguerite reigning crowned with the double crown of beauty and of Monarchy, but of so much use to her husband that he allowed her to do absolutely as she chose, while she did not mind how much he amused himself, nor with whom.

There were, however, soon to come one or two little rifts within the lute. It could not be expected that the music would always remain so harmonious, nor was it possible that such halcyon days could last for ever, without a cloud to mar the serenity of the connubial firmament.

The first little family jar, after the departure of Catherine de Médicis, occurred at what Marguerite sneeringly calls "that little Geneva of a Pau," and, as might have been expected in such Calvinistic surroundings, it had to do with religion. In the gloomy old feudal castle at Pau there was only a very small Catholic chapel, in which Marguerite and her ladies were allowed to hear the Mass.

While Henri and his charming sister, Catherine de Bourbon, went off to their Protestant services, to please the more bigoted inhabitants of Pau none of those Catholics residing in the town were allowed to attend at Mass with the Queen. To effectually prevent their so doing, the drawbridges were raised during the hours for divine service. One day, it being the day of Pentecost, some few Catholics had managed to secrete themselves in the Queen's chapel, and were hearing the Mass, for the first time for years, when they were discovered by the Sieur du Pin, the King's Secretary. This man, Jacques Lallier, was a good servant to Henri de Navarre, but brutal and overbearing. He had the unfortunate townspeople dragged out of the chapel, severely beaten in the Queen's presence, then thrown into dungeons and heavily fined.

A tremendous conflict now ensued between the outraged Queen and her husband. Marguerite demanded not only that the unfortunate Catholics should be released, but that the King should dismiss his Secretary, who was in his master's presence most insolent to the Queen, declaring that the delinquents should remain in prison. Eventually matters reached such a pass that Marguerite declared that if du Pin were not sent away she would herself immediately leave. Henri de Navarre was now

compelled to decide as to whether he should retain his wife or his Secretary, whom he could ill spare. He chose the former while greatly regretting the latter. Thus was the breach healed, and shortly afterwards Marguerite contrived to persuade Henri to remove with her and his Court from Pau to Nérac, at which latter place all went as merrily as before.

CHAPTER XVIII

Fosseuse and the Lovers' War

1579—1580

"THAT Rebours," remarks Marguerite de Valois, "was a malicious girl who did not like me, and who did me all the ill turns in her power."

The Mademoiselle de Rebours of whom the Queen of Navarre speaks was, according to one account, the daughter of Guillaume de Rebours, a President of the Parliament of Paris. While Marguerite had been enjoying herself in her own way, which way consisted in even sleeping in black satin sheets and receiving her adorers in a chamber illuminated with a thousand candles, Henri had been philandering with Rebours.

The *Confession de Sancy*, and other authorities, give this spiteful maid of honour a different parentage, saying that she was the daughter of a certain Montalbert, Sieur de Rebours, a Huguenot gentleman who had been butchered in the great massacre of 1572. Be that as it may, she belonged to the suite of the Queen of Navarre, who had foolishly imitated her mother in surrounding herself with a bevy of handsome young ladies, of whom she sought to make use for her own purposes. Gillonne de Thorigny had been one such, and it will be remembered how the uses to which his sister had been wont to put

Thorigny had nearly resulted in the King's having accomplished that young lady's murder by drowning. She had, however, survived, to finish her career respectably as the wife of a young noble, Pierre de Harcourt, Sieur de Beuvron.

Mademoiselle de Rebours, unfortunately for herself, did not enjoy the good health which the King of Navarre required in the facile companions of his pleasures. When he found the coquetries of his latest mistress being frequently interrupted by the doctor's visits, the fickle Prince ceased to care greatly about her. Thus the poor girl, whose bad tempers may but have been the result of her ill-health, found herself abandoned by her Royal lover without a regret when the Court left Pau for Nérac. She was left behind sick, and that it was a case of "out of sight out of mind" is evident from Marguerite's remark: "By good luck, Rebours remained there ill, when the King, my husband, losing her from his eyes, lost also his affection for her, and commenced to embark himself with Fosseuse, who was more beautiful, and at that time quite a child and perfectly virtuous."

Mademoiselle de Rebours died while still young, at Chenonceaux, and during her illness Marguerite displayed an admirably forgiving nature by frequently visiting her, while saying: "That poor girl suffers dreadfully, but she has also done plenty of harm. May God pardon her, as I do."

Brantôme, delighted of an opportunity of praising up his heroine, remarks, à propos of this forgiving behaviour: "Behold the vengeance and the evil which she wrought her. Behold also, how, by her generosity, this great Queen has been slow to take revenge—how she has been solely good!"

Henri de Navarre himself became seriously ill upon the journey to Nérac, after thus leaving his recent *chère amie* without a regret. At the small town of Eauze, near Montauban, he was suddenly stricken down with a violent fever. Then, if it had not been for the affectionate devotion shown by his lively wife, who was absolutely unsparing of herself in the way in which she assumed the duties of sick-nurse, matters might have gone hardly with the King of Navarre.

For seventeen days, without taking any repose, Marguerite waited hand and foot upon her sick husband. She watched him like a sister—and indeed their relations were far more like those of a tolerant brother and sister than of husband and wife.

Eventually Henri was so touched by Marguerite's attentions that he commenced to praise his wife up to all, "and particularly to his cousin, M. de Turenne, who, doing me the service of a good relation, put me on as good terms with him again as I had ever been—a felicity which lasted during the space of four or five years that I was with him in Gascony."

Thus it happened that, upon their arrival at Nérac, not only was the disagreeable incident about the Secretary du Pin forgotten by Marguerite, but Henri and his wife were inclined to forgive one another anything and everything. Taking advantage of these mutually amicable dispositions, while the Queen of Navarre soon embarked upon her celebrated love-affair with the handsome Champvallon, the King, her husband, ardently attached himself to the very juvenile Françoise de Montmorency, who, from one of her father's titles being that of Baron de Fosseux, was always known as Fosseuse. Properly to understand the semi-Florentine, semi-Spanish, and wholly

Béarnese air of gallantry surrounding the Court at Nérac, we must have recourse to the fair Queen's own description. She places everything so prettily, so romantically, that we can picture to ourselves the pleasant surroundings, the softly amorous landscape, the dreamy *dolce far niente* of the life, which resembles a prolonged scene from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.

"Our Court there was so beautiful and so pleasant that we did not envy that of France. There was present Madame la Princesse de Navarre, the King's sister [Catherine de Bourbon], who since has been married to my nephew, the Duc de Bar, and a goodly number of ladies and girls; the King, my husband, being followed by a fine troop of Seigneurs and gentlemen, as honest fellows as the Court has ever seen; and there was nothing whatever to be regretted about them save the fact of their being Huguenots. But of this diversity of religion one never heard mention. The King, my husband, with Madame la Princesse, his sister, went off to one side to their service, and I, with my following, to the Mass, to a chapel there is in the park.

"When I came out thence we would all meet to stroll together, in a beautiful garden with very long alleys of laurels or cypresses; or we would roam in the charming park, which I had made, with its avenues, three thousand yards in length, lying along the river-side. Then the rest of the day would be passed in all kinds of honest pleasures, usually with a ball in the afternoon and one in the evening."

What a delightful and long-drawn-out idyll it sounds! Do we not only require the brush of a Watteau to portray these delightful *fêtes champêtres*, to complete the radiant young Queen's alluring pen-picture of this home

of all the "honest pleasures"? How could any one avoid being carried away by the delicious atmosphere of gallantry surrounding Nérac? No, not even the steady old Pibrac is to be blamed if he partly yielded to its charms, and felt himself young once more, when we find the Baron de Rosny—the future Duc de Sully—gracefully bowing and posturing, while being instructed in the mazy minuet by that most sympathetic of all Princesses, the amiable Catherine de Bourbon.

Nor can we be too hard upon that rigid man of iron, the grim Sully, if, carried away by the intoxicating atmosphere floating from the glancing river-bed and through the dusky groves of park and garden, he too, in those early days, became as all around him the votary of Venus, Goddess of Love. For does not the great Minister tell us in his *Économies royales* of the pleasures of that happy time; relate, alas! that he too yielded to the charm, and was too often to be found whispering words of passion at the feet of a fair and by no means unresponsive mistress?

Where even a Sully could be carried away, how could a Henri de Navarre be expected to retain his head, his feet, or his heart? The current swept him, with all these, away bodily, and threw him, all unresisting, at the feet of the graceful, laughing, but as yet virtuous, Fosseuse, whence he made no effort to withdraw. For Henri was in love—yes, as deeply and as hopelessly in love as he had been once not long before, with *la petite* Tignonville.

But, although he knew it not, his wife Marguerite was holding a hand in the game which left him dangling day after day after a somewhat saucy and very bright-eyed young lady, one very much developed for her age.

This was only about fifteen, in 1579, the year when the Court moved to Nérac, and when, as we know, Marguerite describes her young attendant as being *toute enfant et toute bonne.* D'Aubigné, as we shall see presently, makes her out even younger than that; but the historian of Henri de Navarre may have been only speaking in general terms, and was perhaps mistaken.

Marguerite de Valois was, for her own purposes, making use of this young temptress to entangle her husband, in order that she herself, with her lover Turenne, might bend him the better to comply with her secret wishes. These were to wage war upon her brother, Henri III., who had so wantonly, by his ill-timed letter, disturbed her pleasant little amour with Henri de La Tour.

Having observed, in the case of Rebours, how easily Henri de Navarre had tired of one who had not resisted his advances, Marguerite had instructed the youthful Fosseuse to be careful to maintain her virtue, and in the meantime to pour the required suggestions into the ear of the Prince just as she was told from time to time. Marguerite says: "The King served Fosseuse, who, depending in everything on me, maintained herself in all honour and virtue, and if she had only kept on in this way she would not have got later into trouble, which brought me so much also."

This amounts to saying that Fosseuse, after having been at first the willing subject of the Queen's will, being carried away by the love which she had begun to feel for the King of Navarre, eventually determined to take a line of her own, and to do as she chose. It was not a very good line certainly, as we shall presently realise, but first let us see what the worthy d'Aubigné has to

say on the subject of Marguerite and her employment of Fosseuse. It will be observed that, as usual, he does not credit the Queen of Navarre with any but interested intentions, but we must also remember that the quite unnecessary war called *La guerre des Amoureux*, or the Lovers' War, was the direct outcome of all this love-making.

"We have touched upon the hatred of the Queen of Navarre for the King, her brother. This resulted in that, with the object of saddling him with a war, at no matter what cost, this artificial woman made use of the love of her husband towards 'Foçeuse,' a young girl of fourteen, of the name of Montmorency, to sow in the mind of this Prince the resolutions that she desired.

"This girl, fearful at the beginning, owing to her age, could not well put in practice her mistress's lessons, so she caused her to be assisted by a *fille de chambre* named Xainte, with whom the King of Navarre was on intimate terms.

"This bold woman reported, without discretion, any news which the Queen of Navarre received (or invented) from the Court, whether the contemptuous words of which her brother made use in his cabinet, or the sneers of Monsieur and the Duc de Guise, which were made at her husband's expense before Madame de Sauve. In addition, the Queen seduced the mistresses of all those who had a voice in the Council, while she herself gained over the Vicomte de Turenne in the matter. All of their conversation consisted only of contempt for a state of peace, with high hopes and exalted views of that which was to be gained by war.

"The minds being thus prepared, there arrived a dilemma which had to be decided, namely, whether to

restore the places of surety for the sake of peace or to defend them by a war. The King only admitted to his secret council the Vicomte de Turenne, Favas, Constant d'Aubigné, and the Secretary Marsillère. According to his own good custom, he put the matter before them in a manner which showed the decision he wanted.

"All those whom he had thus asked for their advice were in love (*amoureux*), and, starting full of the instigations which we have explained above, all could only breathe and combine for war. Thus the war was decided upon, which, for the said reasons, was called the Lovers' War (*La guerre des Amoureux*)."

So far Agrippa d'Aubigné; a man, as we know, always deeply in his master's counsels, until Henri de Navarre, concluding that "Paris was well worth a Mass," eventually changed his religion, and deserted his Huguenot followers to caress his old enemies of the League.

If, however, we now take up Marguerite's Memoirs, we shall find that she sings in a very different key. According to her, she did everything that she could to avert the Lovers' War, and only decided to support the King of Navarre against the brother who had always humiliated her "out of gratitude for the honour that the King, her husband, did her by loving her."

The principal events of the *guerre des Amoureux*, by which, in a time of peace and contentment, the machinations of a few women set the whole of the south of France in a blaze, were not, on the whole, favourable to the Huguenot cause. One event there was, however, which had a very considerable effect upon the future career of Henri de Navarre. By it, instead of being

merely reckoned a dissolute Prince, one who could never resist the attraction of a woman's petticoat, the Béarnais suddenly raised himself to a pinnacle of fame, became for ever stamped with the brand of magnificent courage and soldierly qualities. One can forgive much to a man who could tear himself away from the arms of a Fosseuse to behave as did Henri at the bloody assault upon the city of Cahors.

CHAPTER XIX

The Conquest of Fosseuse

1580—1581

One of the objects of Henri de Navarre in declaring war had been to gain possession of the various towns of his wife's appanage, which were still withheld by the King.

La Fère in Brittany, Agen on the Garonne, not far from Nérac, in Gascony, and Cahors, a strongly fortified city just twenty leagues beyond Agen, all formed part of Marguerite's dowry ; but, in a great measure owing to the constant opposition of the Maréchal de Biron, remained occupied by Catholic and Royal troops, instead of being handed over to the King of Navarre.

The action of Marguerite just prior to the outbreak of the Lovers' War was distinctly such as to deceive the King, her brother. Her old Chancellor, Pibrac, had returned to Paris to look after her interests at Court, while resuming his own old posts. Through him she sent, on several occasions, false news to the King, assuring Henri III. that never had the Protestants been further removed from the idea of taking up arms. No sooner had Henri III. been shown by Pibrac a letter to this effect than he sent his sister a gratification of fifty thousand livres for her supposed good offices

in preserving peace; but no sooner was the war declared than the King told Pibrac violently that he saw his sister's hand in the game.

Nevertheless, while the war lasted Marguerite continued to write to her mother and brother as affectionately and deferentially as if the profoundest peace were reigning, for she wished to leave herself a loophole of escape in the direction of the Catholic Court of France should matters ever become too hot for her at the Protestant Court of Navarre. The relations between Henri de Navarre and the King would seem to have been excellent. Almost up to the time that the war commenced, which was on April 10th, 1580, there was a secret understanding between the two Kings. In a very friendly letter, written by the Béarnais to Henri III. at the end of January of that year, he takes care to say that Marguerite is doing as much to preserve peace as he is himself. He also gives to his wife the credit of having discovered a plot against the King of France of which he warns his brother-in-law.

Henri de Navarre was, in fact, most anxious to make his wife, with whom he was on such friendly terms at this time, appear in the best light in the eyes of the French Court. The more effectually to do this, on April 10th he published a kind of manifesto in the form of an affectionate letter to his wife. In this he speaks as if informing her, for the first time, of the fact, of which she is well aware, that a war is commencing, while giving all the causes that the Huguenots have for creating a breach of the peace. Above all, the King of Navarre, in this letter or manifesto, is careful himself to assume the responsibility for taking up arms.

There was an immense amount of trickery and

double-dealing about the whole of this business, and it was shared by Marguerite. An example of this is to be seen in the case of the sudden attack upon the city of Cahors, which was planned by Henri, who was, after having caused one of the gates to be blown in by *petards*, himself engaged for two days and nights in furious hand-to-hand fighting in the streets.

Lestoille, who relates the affair in detail in his *Journal du Règne du Roy Henri III.*, says that the King of Navarre arrived upon the scene ten hours after the commencement of the conflict, having flown with the diligence of a Béarnais, after having risen from the bed in which he was sleeping with his wife so *that she should suspect nothing*. Thereupon she dared to write and assure their Majesties that her husband was not at the taking of Cahors, when he was fighting there in person, and had lost a large number of good soldiers of his guard.

If the King of Navarre was actually sleeping with his wife—so that she should suspect nothing !—it would seem that it could scarcely have been as far away as Nérac, which is seventy-five miles distant as the crow flies. For Lestoille also reports a fact which seems curious to him, which is that at the commencement of the action Henri was close to the town of Cahors, arranging everything himself. Now it is evident that, if this was the case, even a man as active as the Béarnais could not, in the space of ten hours, have ridden the twenty-five leagues back to Nérac, slept there with his wife, and returned to plunge into the thick of the fighting in the city. To have done so would likewise have entailed twice passing the city of Agen, held by the enemy, and twice crossing the river Garonne. One can easily imagine, therefore, that Marguerite, who was, like her mother, accustomed to travelling

across country, was somewhere near at hand under canvas in a fortified camp. Whatever may have been the actual facts, it is perfectly evident that the Queen of Navarre, when she wrote to the Court to say that Henri had not been present, well knew to the contrary.

The town, in which both the attacked and the attackers were both reinforced several times during the three days of fighting, from street to street and house to house, was eventually captured when its brave Commander, the Seigneur de Vésins, was seriously wounded and forced to retire with the remnant of his fighting force. The place was then sacked and pillaged by the Huguenots with much barbarity—an action for which the Maréchal de Biron subsequently took signal revenge, by putting to the sword all the defenders of the small Protestant places which fell into his hands. During the prolonged conflict Henri was much knocked about, his armour was battered and bruised, his feet torn to pieces so that he could scarcely stand. Several times those with the King of Navarre begged him to retire and expose himself no longer, but he refused, saying that he would either be carried out dead or march out victorious.

It was as a conqueror indeed that Henri returned to revisit Nérac and his beloved Fosseuse, for all France was ringing with his brilliant feat of arms, which was enhanced by the capture of Agen.

When Henri III. learned of the taking of Cahors he was wild with rage, and more than ever convinced that it had been Marguerite who had instigated this *coup de main* upon two of the cities of her appanage.

He sent for Pibrac instantly. "Do you know," he cried, "that Cahors has been taken and sacked, that all the inhabitants have been butchered, and the spoils of the

churches publicly sold at Nérac? Yes," continued the King, "the officers to whom the Queen has given posts have betrayed the place and admitted the enemy; but she shall no longer have the means of harming me. I have this morning given orders for all her letters [of appointments] to be seized, and, as for you, I forbid you either to use her seal or to seal any appointments to offices whatever." Her Chancellor, Pibrac, wrote to the Queen of Navarre how he had maintained, in her defence, that she had doubtless been deceived when she had written that the Huguenots had no intention of taking up arms. But Marguerite's appointment to her appanage had duly been cancelled by the *Procureur-Général du Roi*, whereupon the courageous Pibrac, although in sore disgrace himself, sought out the Queen-Mother. He declared that he knew perfectly well, from the documents signed with his seal, that Marguerite had made no appointments in Cahors, and begged Catherine de Médicis to intercede with her son to get the confiscation rescinded. In this Pibrac was successful, but the worthy Chancellor did not dare to show his face again anywhere near the Louvre for at least five months.

From the outbreak of hostilities Marguerite had succeeded in obtaining from the King of France the order that Nérac, the place in which she herself resided, should be considered neutral, with three leagues of country around its walls. The concession was made to her, upon the understanding that the neutrality of Nérac should exist only while the King of Navarre remained without its walls.

The condition was observed faithfully by both sides, says Marguerite; then, contradicting herself, she adds: "But that did not prevent that the King, my husband,

came often to Nérac, where were his sister and I, it being in his nature to take his pleasure among ladies. Moreover, he was at that time very much in love with Fosseuse, whom he had continued to serve since he had left Rebours, and from whom I never received any bad offices. On that account, my husband did not cease from living with me on such friendly terms as if I had been his sister, seeing that I only sought to gratify him in everything."

It so happened, one day, that the Béarnais, having left the camp to come dangling as usual after Fosseuse, nearly fell into a trap prepared for him by Biron. He had brought some troops with him, but a skilful feint of the Maréchal with his army in the direction of a ford on the river Garonne had caused him to imagine that Biron was far away. No sooner was Henri de Navarre fondling the youthful maid of honour as usual, than Biron swiftly returned and laid siege to Nérac. Had it not been for the very heavy rains this would have become a regular siege, and as it was Biron compelled the King of Navarre to leave the fond blandishments of Fosseuse, to go out and throw his men into the vines surrounding the town to resist the attacking force.

The Maréchal remained with all his army drawn up in battle-array in front of the city walls, and within easy cannot-shot of the Château de Nérac. Upon the battlements of the castle stood the Queen of Navarre, Catherine de Bourbon, and their ladies of honour to see the sport, especially as Biron had allowed some of his cavaliers to detach themselves from his force, to come and request permission to engage in combat for the honour of the ladies under the walls. In the meantime the Maréchal de Biron, who was a bit of a practical joker, was pre-

paring a little surprise for Marguerite, which she little expected. Masking his guns with his troops until he had got them ready to fire, he suddenly wheeled back the men from in front of their muzzles and then, by way of an insult, fired seven or eight shots upon the town, one cannon-ball striking the battlements upon which stood the Princesses and their ladies. The cannon-ball broke up into fragments, stone splinters flew all over the place, the ladies screamed terribly and were very much frightened, but nobody was hurt.

After this act of bravado the Maréchal completed his little pleasantry by sending a herald with a trumpet to the Queen of Navarre, with ironical excuses for having disturbed her. As Marguerite had formerly been upon very good terms with the Maréchal de Biron, who had even been polite enough to forward to her, unopened, her letters which had fallen into his hands, although he now withdrew his army, her indignation was only equalled by her surprise at the insult. She never forgave him, although eventually she consented to accept his apologies, personally tendered to her in Paris.

The King of Navarre, on the other hand, looked upon the matter as a very good joke, and thought that the Maréchal had shown himself a very smart and able soldier by the manner in which he had acted and outwitted him. He eventually employed both Biron and his son in his service, and was greatly indebted to the former for his loyal assistance in fighting against the League. The latter, as Duc de Biron, although greatly beloved by Henri after he became King of France, proved repeatedly a traitor, whom his master was eventually compelled to cause to be beheaded, as a warning to other great nobles engaged in treasonable practices.

After this little surprise, Henri de Navarre remained for three days enjoying the pleasant society at Nérac before he too moved off to continue his warlike operations. Towards the end of that year, 1580, the Duc d'Alençon suddenly arrived from Flanders to enact the part of peacemaker on behalf of the King. He had been continually in correspondence with his sister, who had put into his head the idea that, if he could contrive to get his brother to employ him in the matter, he might himself profit by the proposed peace, by obtaining some of the troops engaged on either side to join in his Flemish expedition.

The mediator was not, however, allowed to come alone, but Catherine de Médicis set herself in movement also and accompanied him, with her usual bevy of women, to the Château de Fleix, in Périgord. At this place the peace was signed on November 27th, and by the terms the Huguenots profited largely, while the King of Navarre at length obtained possession of Marguerite's dowry.

While François, being considerably backed up by the sister who adored him, had thus succeeded once more in his negotiations, his brother the King only regarded him with the greater jealousy on account of the success that had attended his efforts. This, however, did not trouble either him or the Queen of Navarre very greatly, especially as François proceeded to the pleasant Court of Nérac, where he remained while taking his fill of enjoyment for no less than seven months.

Henri III., however, was only the more convinced, by d'Alençon's long delay at his sister's Court, of the fact that he and Marguerite had engineered the war together for the sole reason that François might enjoy the glory

of the peace. His hatred against both increased, and he swore to his *mignons* that he would yet live to be the ruin of them both.

Unfortunately for the Queen of Navarre, the long-desired advent of her brother did not prove to be an unmixed blessing, or one that was to conduce to the serenity of a Court where, until the arrival of d'Alençon, all had gone happy as a marriage-bell. For the wicked little God of Love, who in past times had, in the matter of Madame de Sauve, already stirred up such unfortunate strife and contention between the King of Navarre and his brother-in-law, must needs once again poke his finger into the pie.

Thus, what should happen but that Henri de Navarre should suddenly discover that the bewitching Françoise de Montmorency, she whom in speaking about her to his wife he was already commencing to call "his girl" (*sa fille*), was no longer his alone, but apparently d'Alençon's girl also. For, alas! François too was in love with Fosseuse.

"Unfortunately for me," says Marguerite, "he became deeply enamoured of Fosseuse. This led the King, my husband, to regard me with ill-will, as he fancied that I was backing up my brother's suit against him."

Eventually, with considerable difficulty, for the sake of her own peace of mind, the Queen of Navarre contrived to persuade her brother to curb his passion for the too attractive maiden, and to cease to continue his attentions to her. No sooner, however, had Fortune been considerate enough to straighten matters out, François recovered from his passion and Henri de Navarre been reassured, than the hitherto docile Fosseuse

it was who took the bit between her teeth and caused further trouble. This young lady, whom, Marguerite remarks, "loved my husband extremely, and who up to this time had only allowed him such familiarities as might decently be permitted, to take away his jealousy of my brother, surrendered herself so completely to his will that she became enceinte." That, in spite of her usual tolerance towards her husband in the matter of his amours, this unlucky mischance proved no less a misfortune for Marguerite herself than for the hitherto well-behaved Fosseuse, is shown by what followed.

"Thereupon, finding herself in that condition, she changed completely in her mode of procedure towards me; instead of being open with me and doing me all the good services she could with the King, my husband, she commenced to hide from me and to do me as many ill turns as she had formerly done me good ones. She cast such a spell over the King, my husband, that in a short time I found him completely changed. He estranged himself from and avoided me, and no longer showed in my company the pleasure that he had done during the four or five happy years that I had passed with him in Gascony, while Fosseuse had conducted herself in a virtuous manner."

Eventually Fosseuse, in order to conceal her condition, persuaded the King to resort with her to the waters of Aigues-Caudes, which are in Béarn, near Pau. Marguerite flatly refused to go with them, averring as an excuse that she could not again go to such a Calvinistic neighbourhood. Neither by flattery nor threats could Henri conquer his wife's resistance. At length the King told the Queen "that his girl [for so he called Fosseuse] required to go there to cure the indigestion which

troubled her, but that it was not seemly that she should go there without me, as people might make remarks for which there was no cause. At length I arranged that two of her companions, Rebours and Villesavin, with the governess, should accompany her.

"They went off with him while I waited at Banière."

Now we find once more appearing upon the scene that malicious girl Rebours, and find her, moreover, making every effort to reinstate herself in her former position of mistress of Henri de Navarre. She endeavours to recapture the heart of the Béarnais, and she does not hesitate to calumniate both Fosseuse and Marguerite in her frenzied efforts. Rebours had by no means been, like Fosseuse, "toute enfant et toute bonne" when first she had fallen into the arms of Henri; but we will refer to her antecedents in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XX

Fosseuse and Marguerite

1581

Mademoiselle de Rebours, the maid of honour whom Marguerite had such cause for disliking, had been the mistress of both the Maréchal de Montmorency (Damville) and the Seigneur de Frontenac before she attracted the attention of Henri de Navarre. That this young lady was not devoid of those attractions that both enchain and retain the heart is evident from an existing sonnet in her praise in the *Muse chasseresse* of Guillaume du Sable. It was written by the poet for the enamoured Frontenac, and its quaint verses portray the undying devotion of her lover for Rebours. Perhaps the most amusing verses are the two last, which speak of the gallant's "loyal estomac," making this part of his anatomy the rhyme to Frontenac, and also describing it as the object of attack by the God of Love.

N'Offense pas ce Dieu; il a la même flèche
Qui, en son cœur, a fait luire pareille brèche,
Perçant de part en part son loyal estomac.

Donc, si pour l'avenir tu veux être servie
Non pas pour quelque temps, mais pour toute la vie,
Ne change, s'il te plaît, ton humble Frontenac.

We have already mentioned the doubt existing as to whether Mademoiselle de Rebours was the daughter of a Huguenot noble or of "a man of the robe," a President of the Parliament of Paris. That by many this latter was considered to be her father is proved by a witty saying reported by Lestoille, the point of the jest lying in the fact that *aller à rebours* means to go the wrong way.

In the summer of 1590 Henri de Navarre, having in the previous year succeeded to the Crown of France, was, with an army of Royalists and Politiques, besieging Paris, then held by the troops of the League. A cannon-ball from his army chanced, upon June 16th, to break the leg of the President Rebours inside the city walls. Since this said Rebours was considered by the violent preachers, who were in the habit of stirring up the people of Paris, to be a Royalist and a Politique, they spoke of him from the pulpit with a broad joke or pun, saying that "les coups que tiraient les Roiaux allaient tout à rebours."

Of Mademoiselle de Rebours Marguerite has more to say, while dealing with the subject of the visit of Fosseuse, in her company, and that of the King of Navarre, to Aigues-Caudes :

"I heard daily from Rebours, a corrupt and double-faced girl, who was she whom he had formerly loved, and whose sole desire was to oust Fosseuse, thinking that she would obtain her place in the good graces of the King, my husband. She told me that Fosseuse was doing me all the bad turns that she could—continually running me down, and flattering herself that, if she should happen to have a son, she would be able to get rid of me, and to marry the King, my husband. With this intention, Rebours said that Fosseuse wished to compel me to go to Pau, and had caused the King, my husband, to deter-

mine to compel me to go there by will or by force as soon as he should return to Banière."

The Queen of Navarre further informs us that, upon receipt of this ill news from the evil-intentioned Rebours, she shed more tears than they drank drops of water at Aigues-Caudes.

It must be noted that Marguerite was at this time more or less alone ; at all events she had, for the moment, no particular male friend at hand into whose ears she could pour all her woes in a delicious intimacy. For the Vicomte de Turenne had gone off with the Duc d'Alençon when he had taken his departure, and the handsome Harlay de Champvallon had not as yet taken his place in that portion of her anatomy which, like the "estomac" of Frontenac, she considered to contain her heart.

The Queen of Navarre was accordingly left in the anguish of doubt alone at Banière, as she calls the place, and which is supposed to be Bagnères or Bavière, her spelling being by no means to be relied on. Above everything, she dreaded being forced to return to that city of penitence, "that little Geneva," Pau.

As it happened, however, the sportive Rebours was but playing a game with the Queen, and neither Fosseuse nor Henri de Navarre had, under existing circumstances, any more desire to find themselves in that Calvinistic centre than had Marguerite herself.

At the end of some six weeks her fears were put to rest. The party returned from Aigues-Caudes, Fosseuse still suffering from "the indigestion" that Henri had spoken of, and all went back together to Nérac.

At this place the chatter of the Court concerned scarcely any other subject than Fosseuse and her con-

dition; but still the young maid of honour made no avowal to the mistress who had formerly treated her so affectionately, nor did she come to seek her pardon for her indiscretion. Being unable to prevent what was going to happen, Marguerite determined, if possible, at all events, to regain the lost confidence of her favourite. She went to the child—for Fosseuse was but little more—and boldly asked her to confess what had happened. More than this, in a womanly manner she offered her her help, in any way in which she could give it, in order to save her from disgrace—a disgrace which must also reach her mistress. "I have," so the Queen of Navarre told Fosseuse, "an excuse on account of the plague raging even in this town for proceeding to my husband the King's house of Mas d'Agenais, which is situated in a very lonely spot. I will take you there with me, and with us only such companions as you may choose. Meanwhile the King, my husband, will go off hunting elsewhere, whence he will not return until after your delivery; and in this way we shall smother up this scandal, which affects me as much as yourself."

It might have been expected that Fosseuse, touched by this kindness on the part of the Queen, would have burst into tears, fallen at her feet, and begged her forgiveness. Far from doing so, the little wretch took a different line altogether, flew into a rage, shouted at the Queen, and denied everything. Finally she bounced off in a tantrum to find the King of Navarre, to whom she complained that Marguerite was taking her character away in the most abominable manner, with the result that Henri's anger, too, was kindled against his wife.

A French author of the last century, commenting upon the whole of this part of the story of Fosseuse,

considers it to have been carefully written for effect, from the way the words are chosen in Marguerite's Memoirs; he also considers that the conduct of Fosseuse, in flying into a temper and denying everything, shows her as a worthy adversary of the Queen of Navarre. He points out that, under the circumstances of the case, the bold offers of Marguerite are no less impossible in real life than they would be in a novel or on the stage.

Finally, he very particularly asks the question whether Fosseuse merely shrank from an avowal of her shame, or if there were not something else behind. We also may conjecture—did not she, in good sooth, recall when, being offered the opportunity of being taken off to the Queen's house of love-making rendezvous, the fact that the Princess making the offer to conduct her to the lonely mansion was a Médicis and a Valois? Might not these smiles, these caresses from the Royal rival's lips at Nérac have foretold a vision of a dagger or a cup of poison awaiting the lovely and undefended young creature at Mas d'Agenais?

It may well have been terror which caused the raised tones, the angry denial of Fosseuse, fear which caused her to run off for protection to the King of Navarre. For how could Fosseuse have been so long about the Court of either Paris or Nérac and not have heard of the death of Du Guast, nor what people said as to who had guided the hand of his assassin?

Whatever may have been the fears or the feelings of Fosseuse with regard to a possible visit to Mas d'Agenais, it is evident that at Nérac, with Henri at hand to protect her, she felt herself safe. Accordingly she gave herself airs, and informed Marguerite arrogantly that she had known for some time past that the Queen had ceased

to love her, and that she only sought a pretext to ruin her. The angry girl also said that she would make all those who accused her swallow the lie. When Henri came in in turn to fight the battle for "his girl," he sang in the same key to his wife, and that it was only a very ridiculous and false key he was compelled humbly to avow to her when the inevitable moment for Fosseuse had at length arrived.

Marguerite relates the story in great detail ; how the doctor came in the middle of the night and informed the King that Fosseuse was taken with the pains of child-birth, and how he in turn, taking the bull by the horns, avowed to the Queen of Navarre that he had been telling her nothing but a pack of lies, for which he now was sorry. Then he ended up with the calm request that Marguerite should rise from her bed and go to Fosseuse in her trouble. Then, was ever wifely devotion seen to equal that of Marguerite? Hardly, we should think, has it ever been carried to such a length. Let us see how she replied to Henri.

"I replied that I honoured him too much to take anything amiss that came from him ; that I would go to her and behave to her as if she were my own daughter ; but meanwhile he must go off hunting, and take every one with him, so that nothing should be heard about the matter."

Marguerite at once caused the patient to be removed from the room of the maids of honour to a separate chamber, with the doctor and some women to wait upon her, and remained in person to see the poor girl through her trouble. But, at last, the childless Queen of Navarre cries triumphantly : "God willed that it was only a girl, and that, moreover, it was stillborn."

CHAPTER XXI

The End of Fosseuse

1582

If ever a man, be he Prince or peasant, can be accused of behaving in an unreasonable manner, then surely that man was Henri de Navarre upon the evening after the accouchement of Fosseuse. When he had disturbed his wife during the preceding night, and, after remarking to her, "You know how dearly I love Fosseuse," blandly requested her assistance in the delicate matter on hand, Marguerite had cheerfully complied with her husband's wishes.

But he was not satisfied. Upon his return in the evening from hunting, after first going to see Fosseuse, he sought his wife in her chamber, where she, being perfectly tired out, had gone to bed. Henri then calmly requested her to get up again, to go and visit the girl once more, suggesting that, by so doing, she would cause all the scandal which was about the palace to cease.

Marguerite, we are glad to say, had too much spirit to do anything of the sort. She replied that she had gone when it had been necessary, and then done everything that had been in her power, but that now no more should be required from her, and that she was in bed and would stay there.

Thereupon the King of Navarre became very angry ; while Marguerite, on her side, was extremely hurt at the ingratitude which he displayed, an ingratitude which was shared by Fosseuse, who frequently afterwards incited Henri to get into fits of petulant temper with the mistress who had done so much for her.

In any case, the happy days for Marguerite at Nérac were now at an end, and those of her departure at hand. Her brother, the King, had for long past thought it time to break up the friendly relations which had existed between his sister and her husband ; but, as we know, he had signally failed in the matter of the Vicomte de Turenne. He now instigated his mother to do all that lay in her power to induce Marguerite to return to the Court of France.

Catherine de Médicis accordingly wrote several letters to the Queen of Navarre, representing that several years had now elapsed since she had seen her daughter, who surely ought to be able to spare the time to come and pay her a visit. The better to induce her to come, Henri III. sent his sister the large sum of fifteen thousand crowns, wherewith to defray her travelling expenses.

Catherine at the same time wrote that she would come as far as the province of Saintonge to meet Marguerite; that is to say, two-thirds of the distance from Paris to the dominions of Navarre, and she requested her daughter to persuade her husband to accompany her to meet her there.

Marguerite saw perfectly well through the real motives which prompted this return of tenderness on her brother's part. Nevertheless, although it was without any confidence, it was likewise without any feeling of repugnance that she allowed herself to be moved by the letters of

her brother and her mother, and decided, for her own reasons, to leave Nérac, where all had become insipid and displeasing. In Paris, although she does not mention the fact, she would meet again the handsome Harlay de Champvallon, whose acquaintance she had made in the suite of her brother François not long before. This pleasant anticipation was, doubtless, a set-off in her mind against the fact that she understood not only that her brother was seeking some more easy way of wreaking his vengeance upon her than he could attain while she was at a distance, but that he wished to learn from her the secret chronicle of all that went on in the Court of Navarre. Both Henri III. and the Queen-Mother likewise, she knew, wished to make of her once more, as at the time of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, the lure wherewith to attract the King of Navarre and the Huguenots to Paris.

From the time when she took this journey, which was in the year 1582, Marguerite has very prudently suppressed those interesting records of her life, which, coloured as they doubtless were so as to throw the light she required over the various events they describe, have proved such an invaluable fund for the historian to draw upon ever since her day.

Since it will be for the last time that we shall be able to consult with the Queen of Navarre in person, we will give her final paragraphs verbatim, by which it will be noticed that she contrived to get even with both her husband and Fosseuse for their ingratitude by taking away "his girl" with her, which, as she belonged to her suite, she had of course a perfect right to do.

"For the King was very anxious to withdraw the King, my husband, from Gascony, in order to be able to

keep him at the Court in the same position that he and my brother formerly occupied ; and the Maréchal de Matignon, being desirous of obtaining the supreme command in Gascony, was persuading him to do this.

"All these fine appearances of goodwill did not deceive me as to what was to be expected from a return to the Court, as I had experienced in the past how much they were worth. I determined, however, to draw profit from his coffers, and to go only for a few months, so that I might arrange both my own affairs and those of the King, my husband. I also thought that it would serve to divert his love from Fosseuse, *whom I was taking away with me*, in order that my husband, seeing her no longer, might make a start as soon as possible with some other woman, who would not show herself so inimical to me.

"I had sufficient trouble in inducing the King, my husband, to consent to my taking Fosseuse with me upon this journey ; it annoyed him that she should leave after there had been so much scandal concerning him with her. He became in consequence much kinder to me, trying very hard to induce me to change my intention of returning to France."

Marguerite, however, proved inflexible. She had written to give her promise, she had pocketed her brother's fifteen thousand crowns, she wished to remove her husband's troublesome young mistress from his side, and, above all, she wished once again to gladden her eyes with a glimpse of, what was then the centre of European civilisation and luxury, the Court of France. Thus she concludes her diary with the following words : "The evil fate which was luring me to the Court triumphed over the disinclination that I felt to repair thither just

as the King, my husband, was beginning to treat me with more affection."

So Marguerite went off on her journey and took Fosseuse with her, while Henri de Navarre, resolved to see as much as possible of his young favourite, accompanied the couple. The departure from Nérac took place at the beginning of February 1582, and the journey was most leisurely, Marguerite being accompanied by many wagon-loads of boxes and trunks. At every château and city the Royal couple were most hospitably received, a considerable stay being made with the Prince de Condé at Saint-Jean-d'Angély, in Saintonge.

Having recruited a regular army of gentlemen as escort, the greater number of whom were Protestants, they were met in state in the middle of March by the Maréchal Jacques de Matignon, by the order of the King of France. At the end of that month they found the Queen-Mother waiting to receive them at La Mothe-Saint-Héraye, where Catherine de Médicis was being royally entertained, with all her Flying Squadron, in the castle belonging to Lusignan, Seigneur de Lansac, who was her Superintendent of Finances.

The meeting between Henri de Navarre and his mother-in-law was amicable, but it did not bring about the results which Catherine desired. There was the usual contention between her and her son-in-law on the question of the delivery by the Huguenots of the places of surety ; moreover, Henri flatly refused to return with the Queen-Mother to Paris. He went, however, a little further with the two Queens, and then left them, after taking a last tender farewell of Fosseuse. Marguerite and her mother did not reach the Court until the end of May 1582.

In order to keep the fair young sinner out of the way of the King of Navarre in the future, means were eventually taken to dispose of the hand of Fosseuse in marriage to a certain Saint-Marc, Seigneur de Broc. After marriage, which in those days was too often but the prelude to further levity of conduct on the part of young ladies of the Court, Fosseuse sunk into oblivion, and caused no further scandal in connection with her name.

Although, upon leaving the two Queens, the King of Navarre had marched off with his following to La Rochelle, there to seek for consolation with some of the other pretty sinners mentioned in the early pages of this work, he by no means forgot his Fosseuse before Marguerite finally contrived to get rid of the girl by handing her over to a husband. This was not without her having had further trouble concerning her, and the interest which the King, her husband, still continued to take in his wife's maid of honour is shown by the fact that he sent the Sieur de Frontenac formally to complain and express his displeasure to Marguerite when, acting on her mother's advice, she sent Fosseuse away from the Court. This action brought down upon Henri the wrath, not only of his wife and the Queen-Mother, but resulted in his receiving angry letters from both of them. That from Catherine de Médicis can indeed be looked upon in no other light than of a severe dressing-down administered to her son-in-law.

We now no longer find in Marguerite the former complaisant spouse, and one would be inclined to think that even Henri de Navarre must have realised that he had gone a little too far when he received his wife's spirited letter, which ran as follows :

" You say that there will be no shame in my com-

plying with your request. I believe it, also thinking you reasonable enough not to command me to do anything unbefitting a person of my quality, nor affecting my honour, in which you have too much interest. But if you should request me to keep with me a girl by whom, in the eyes of everybody, you have had a child, you would find that, both by the indignity you would do me and the reputation which I should earn, it would be a shameful action.

"You write to me that, in order to shut the mouths of the King, the two Queens, or of those who should speak to me on the subject, I should reply to them that you love her, and that, on that account, I love her also. That reply would be all very well if speaking of one of your servitors or female servants, but of a mistress! . . . I have suffered that which I will not say no Princess, but no simple young lady should suffer, having succoured her, hidden her fault, and ever since kept her by me. If you do not call that contenting you, I should like to know what you call it?"

Catherine de Médicis conveyed her violent reproof in a letter of much greater length; we will dip into the middle of it.

"I do not know what occasion you had to do this, bearing in mind that when you separated you said that you were saying good-bye to Fosseuse as to one whom you had no hope of seeing again, and you know that it was only reasonable to send her to her mother, seeing that she had been so crazy as to abandon herself to you. For you are not the first husband young and not very wise in such matters, but I certainly find you the first, after such a thing happening, to hold the language you do to your wife. I had the honour of espousing the

King, my lord and your Sovereign, whose daughter you have espoused ; but the one thing of which he (Henri II.) was the most vexed was when I learned any news of this description ; and when he found that Madame de Flamin was with child he considered it perfectly correct that she should be sent away. And never did he draw a long face nor use the rough side of his tongue about it. Again, with Madame de Valentinois [Diane de Poitiers], it was, as with Madame d'Étampes [Anne de Pisseleu, mistress of François I.], all in honour, but of those who were such fools as to let fly everywhere the reports of it all, he would have been excessively annoyed if I had still kept them by me. And if he was my King, and yours, this is my daughter and the sister of your King, who, if you will but consider the matter, serves you more than you think, and who loves and honours you as if she had had as much honour in marrying you as if you had been a son of France and she a subject. It is not the way to treat women of quality, and, belonging to such a House, to insult them in conformity to the wishes of a common prostitute. For all the world, not France alone, knows about her child, of which you were the father.

" Then, too, for a presumptuous and impudent little gallant [Frontenac] to have dared to have accepted from his master such a command, and to speak to her [Marguerite] in such a way ! Indeed, I cannot believe that he comes from you, for, after all, you are too well born, and of the same House of which she is the issue [both Henri and Marguerite were descendants of Charles V.], not to know how you ought to live with the daughter of your King, and sister of he who at this present time commands both this Kingdom and you."

It will be noticed, in the above, how often Catherine seeks to put the King of Navarre in what she considers his proper place, speaking of Henri III. as "his Sovereign." She should have merely said his Suzerain, for the Principality of Albret, for of the ancient Kingdom of Navarre Henri was the legitimate and independent ruler, without any reference whatever to the Court of France, any more than to that of Spain. In the latter country the greater part of Navarre lay, until torn from King Jean d'Albret and Queen Catherine de Foix by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1512.

One of the constant causes of annoyance of Henri with his wife was the fact that she was in the habit of asserting to herself a higher lineage, as a daughter of France, than his own as a King of Navarre; and yet they were cousins, their common great-grandfather having been Charles, Comte d'Angoulême, who died in 1496, and whose great-grandfather had been Charles V., who died in 1380.

In diving once more, further on, into Catherine's lengthy letter of reprimand, we find her having another fly out at Fosseuse, saying that she has counselled her daughter to lose no time, but to fling out "this pretty little beast."

"For," she adds, "so long as I live, I will suffer nothing to prevent or diminish the friendship of those who are as near to me as she [Marguerite] is. I beg you, therefore, after this fine messenger of a Frontenac shall have told you all that he can to put you against your wife, to become yourself once more, to consider the harm you have done yourself by listening to their advice, and to return to the proper path. That will oblige you to love us more, and believe that the King and we all do love you.

And as much as I have told the Sieur de Curton, whom I send to you, I shall expect him to inform you of, but I will just inform you of this, that this self-sufficient fellow of a Frontenac has told all Paris that if Fosseuse goes away you will never come to the Court. From this you will perhaps be able to understand how wise it is, or how it affects your honour and reputation, to bring about, out of a youthful folly, that which may cause a result affecting the good welfare and repose of this Kingdom, and you above all, who, for your own private passion, will bring constant trouble upon your own head."

Truly Catherine de Médicis was in a terrible rage when she delivered herself in this manner to the King of Navarre ; and, had her daughter been other than what she was, we should have been inclined thoroughly to sympathise with the outraged mother's feelings.

All this time, however, as the Court well knew, Marguerite, far from enacting the part of a virtuous wife, was carrying on an affair with the handsome Harlay de Champvallon, whom she had met at Cadillac, and to whom she was, when he was not present, writing the most impassioned love-letters, in the stilted style then known as " pure Phébus."

CHAPTER XXII

Marguerite and Champvallon

1580—1583

Upon her first return to the Court of France Marguerite had no cause to complain of her reception. She was on good terms with her mother, whose protection was alone a shield to her daughter against the ill-will of the King. Henri III., however, had his own reasons at first for keeping on good terms with his sister : he wished her to draw her husband after her to Paris, and, to please him, she frequently wrote to the King of Navarre, urging him to come, which he very wisely declined to do.

Marguerite was, however, very careful not to trust herself within the walls of the Louvre. Having been considerably in want of money, she had urged her Chancellor, de Pibrac, not long before, to buy from her a palace called the Hôtel d'Anjou. Although grumbling a bit, her faithful old servant had purchased this hôtel, at a large figure, just to oblige his mistress. He made a bad bargain, as, although he contrived to get rid of it again, to the Duchesse de Longueville, Pibrac was compelled to do so at a considerable loss.

Being in want of a residence, the Queen of Navarre bought, in June 1582, a magnificent hôtel from the

Chancellor Birague or Birago, an Italian who had come to France in the suite of Catherine de Médicis. In this palace Marguerite installed herself in great luxury, which the generosity of her brother, and especially of her mother, enabled her to do. Catherine had recently profited largely by the liberality of her son, who had bestowed upon her several Duchies and Seigneuries, including those of Orléans and Valois. She now bestowed in turn, with the permission of the King, the splendid Duchy of Valois and the Counties of Senlis, Clermont, and Étampes upon her daughter the Queen of Navarre.

While Marguerite continued to write to her husband, to urge him to come to the Court, where it would seem that the King desired his presence more as a buffer against the Guise faction than for any other reason, she also kept the King of Navarre well posted as to everything that went on affecting his interests or those of his partisans. Thus the King and Queen of Navarre remained upon most excellent terms until the quarrel occurred concerning Fosseuse, the details of which have been given.

After this event the old terms of intimacy appear to have slackened, but another cause for the partial cessation of their interest in each other lay in the fact that the affections of both husband and wife were deeply engaged elsewhere. While Marguerite was now passionately in love with Harlay de Champvallon, Henri had now plunged deeply into his amour with the beautiful Comtesse de Gramont et Guiche, who is best known to history as *La belle Corisande.*

We will refer to this amiable lady later, after first devoting a few words to the latest lover of the Queen of Navarre. It was in the year 1580 that a young

gentleman named Jacques de Harlay, Baron de Champvallon, came to the Court of Navarre in the train of François, Duc d'Alençon. At first he paid no attention to the charms of the Queen of Navarre, for the very good reason that his thoughts were elsewhere, he having fixed his affections upon one of her waiting-ladies, eighteen years of age, named the Comtesse Suzanne de Luze.

Marguerite, on her side, had not lost much time in being attracted by the youthful grace of Champvallon, who appears to have been the handsomest man of his day in France. She saw him often with his lady-love, and became inspired with the desire of replacing her maid of honour in his heart. Not being overburdened with an excess of modesty, the Queen caused *le beau* Champvallon to be informed of the honour which she proposed to bestow upon him. To her surprise, she was informed of the contemptuous reply made by Harlay, which was to the effect that what was good enough for everybody else was not good enough for him.

Far from being turned from her object by this insult, upon learning how her advances had been rejected with scorn, Marguerite's passion increased. That which had merely been a caprice now became an ardent desire, which she determined to gratify, no matter by what means. Absolutely unscrupulous, she made of the young Comtesse herself the means by which she was to lure her lover. Suzanne was ordered by her mistress to write an invitation to Champvallon to a *tête-à-tête* supper party. Upon his arrival the gallant found a third *convive* at the feast, in the person of the Queen of Navarre, arrayed for conquest. Suzanne was speedily put into a state of torpid slumber by means of drugged

wine, after which the Queen of Navarre found ample opportunity of asking Harlay the question as to whether or no it was true that he found her so very repulsive.

Apparently the young Baron de Champvallon was sufficiently a courtier to know how to give the proper reply ; for on the following day the unhappy Suzanne de Luze received the order to return to her mother's château in Auvergne.

The amours of Marguerite and Harlay were interrupted after a few months of bliss, but they were renewed after the young Queen had installed herself in the splendid residence which she had bought in Paris from the Chancellor de Birague. Hitherto Marguerite, greatly to her distress, had been deprived of the felicity of presenting her husband with an heir. Now, however, she was able to cry quits with Henri de Navarre for what had happened with Fosseuse, for, by Champvallon, the Queen of Navarre became the mother of a son, born on April 20th, 1583.

This son was at first brought up, under the name of Louis de Vaux, by a perfumer of Paris. Later he became an intriguing monk, known by the name of le Père Ange, or le Père Archange. Then, in the capacity of confessor and spiritual director to the Marquise de Verneuil, the neglected mistress of Henri IV., he became one of the most dangerous agents of that conspiracy of vengeance which resulted in the King's death under the dagger of Ravaillac.

Strange and tragic indeed was the fatality by which the unlawful son of Marguerite should become linked with the enemies of her former husband, to aid in taking from him at the same time his crown and his life.

To return to the year 1582. When Marguerite had

not been very long in Paris, in fact at the very time that she was taking such a very high hand in the affair about Fosseuse in her letter to her husband, she was suffering terrible pangs, owing to the infidelity of her adored Champvallon. Possibly because he feared the anger of the King, he now began to think of taking a wife, and, in fact, at the end of August obtained the hand of a very great lady. This was Catherine de la Marck, Dame de Breval, the daughter of Robert de la Marck, Duc de Bouillon. In the previous year Marguerite had herself proposed a wife to her lover, in the shape of "a widow, an honest woman having thirty thousand livres yearly and two hundred thousand livres in the bank."

Harlay had not, however, cared about being saddled with this middle-aged widow, who had two children, but preferred to select his wife for himself, with the result that when the Queen of Navarre learned of his marriage she had a sad attack of jealousy, and wrote to Harlay as follows :

"There is, then, neither justice left in heaven nor fidelity upon earth! Triumph of my too ardent love! Boast of having deceived me! laugh at it and make sport of it with her from whom I receive this sole consolation, that her want of merit will bring you the just remorse of the wrong you have done. . . . Upon receiving this letter, the last from me, I beg you to return it, for I do not choose that, in the pretty interview that you will have this evening, it shall serve to the father and the daughter as a subject of mirth at my expense."

In spite of his marriage, the intimacy with Champvallon continued, and it is written about at length both by the malicious German Ambassador, Busbecq and by

d'Aubigné. This latter says that he once had the misfortune to interrupt in person, at Cadillac, a very compromising *tête-à-tête* between the Queen of Navarre and Harlay de Champvallon, and that this resulted in his earning her eternal hatred, and his having to suffer in consequence upon many occasions. If Marguerite hated d'Aubigné for what was in all probability a piece of ill-timed curiosity on his part, the historian was, however, quite able to look after himself, and, by many a quip and an impudent *bon mot*, to pay his Royal mistress back as good as she gave. We need, therefore, waste no sympathy on the worthy Agrippa for the "various disgraces" which he tells us that Marguerite caused him to undergo.

Previous to the time when Marguerite received the fatal tidings of Champvallon's marriage she had been full of apprehension. At that date she wrote to him : " *Mon Dieu* ! my dear life, can I live in apprehension of that misfortune of which I daily hear some new rumour ? I am in despair, I die a thousand and a thousand times. No criminal ever hears his sentence with more impatience, rage, and mortal pain, than I wait for the news of this battle in which awaits me the hour or the misery of my life in the preservation or the end of your own."

After his marriage, when her unfaithful lover writes his apologies for his conduct, we find the Queen of Navarre not only accepting them but making her own excuses for the tone she has adopted : " If one thousandth part of my worries were known to you, you would not find it strange that my letter should seem as involved as my mind. Excuse, then, those errors, and judge if, in the midst of so many ills, real martyrdom of love, I still sing your glory, as, being without the ills and the gehennas, I shall know how worthily to acquit myself.

Adieu! my life, I kiss a million times those beautiful eyes with that splendid hair, my dear and sweet bonds."

Upon another occasion, when an accident has prevented a rendezvous, after crying out against all humanity, she wonders "if the sun has not changed its course in seeing me miss the days destined to the holy sacrifices of love," and then continues with a rhapsody concerning their ravished souls being joined in the Empyreal Heaven! From heaven this very loving Princess descends again to earth, to curse all those who have been the cause of her being unable to keep her appointment, and who generally run counter to her desires.

"Infernal and accursed race! who dull my eyes by the abundance of my tears, take away the lustre from my beauty—which I can describe as such since it has pleased you—and trouble my mind to such an extent that I can only compare it to a state of chaos.

"Do not, then, regret not to have seen me, but wish and pray Heaven constantly that, if love should not prove strong enough to protect me, at all events grim Death will not refuse me his aid."

It is this involved, rhapsodical style in which Marguerite delighted to pour out her soul to Harlay de Champvallon, which has been characterised as "du pur Phébus," or Phœbus. The Queen of Navarre could reel it off at will, by pages at a time. When she became tired of writing in prose, she varied her style by writing at great length in extremely passionate verse. In this she compares herself to palm-trees, iron, fire, wind, to an Etna of sobs, and to a sea of tears! Of anything to do with fire she is particularly fond; accordingly we are not at all surprised to find this ardent Princess even comparing herself to a "cold salamander," which, when

placed in the furnace, has no fear of the flames—in fact, it would seem, rather likes them.

We will merely reproduce her "salamander" verse—as one is enough; *ex uno, disce omnes*!

> La froide salamandre, au chaud antipathique,
> Met parmi ce brasier sa chaleur en pratique,
> Et la brûlante ardeur n'y nuit que point ou peu.
> Je dure dans le feu, comme la salamandre,
> Le chaud ne la consomme; il ne la met en cendre;
> Elle ne craint la flamme, et je ne crains le feu.

After some fifty verses of this sort of thing the wonder to the reader is not that the fire could not consume Marguerite, but rather that the Queen of Navarre did not herself consume the fire! At all events, to the impartial critic of the events of her life and those of her husband, it must appear that the outcry which she made at this time, just because the King of Navarre requested her not to send Fosseuse away, was a little unreasonable. For Champvallon was to her a source of daily joy, of amorous and cerebral excitement, whether present or absent; while Henri, who had no intention whatever of returning to the Court, could scarcely expect to see the young Françoise de Montmorency ever again.

The autumn of that year 1583 was a particularly lively one at the Court of the Louvre. It was a time of balls, music, and gaiety. Henri III. amused himself with dancing, and to Marguerite, in the midst of a series of fêtes in which she was one of the leading spirits, there came the recollection of her husband.

Knowing full well that, should he appear upon the scene, he would in no means interfere with her enjoy-

ments, Marguerite wrote to her husband playfully, that if he were an honest man he would quit agriculture and the humour of a Timon to come and live among men. Henri de Navarre preferred to continue to lead his existence elsewhere—among women. Accordingly, although we can well believe that there was something really companionable in the jovial nature of the King of Navarre, some traits which made him desirable to his volatile spouse, she had, perforce, to continue to content herself with the love of Champvallon when he was present, or with writing to him when he was away. Her "Phébus" now became more and more exalted in style, more transcendental than ever in its figures of speech. After telling her lover at first, just to excite his jealousy a little, that her apartments had been full of gallants upon the previous night, she lets herself go more than ever, in a letter written at this period.

"Such diversions as would shake any other passion make upon mine as much effect as the waves of the sea on a moveless sun. Adieu, my beautiful sun! adieu, my handsome angel! lovely miracle of nature. I kiss those millions of perfections which the gods have delighted in making and which men delight in admiring." This was not bad for style, even for Marguerite, when writing to the husband of another woman. Alas! however, for the infidelity of man. Alas! likewise for the intrigues of women—notably of one woman, Madame de Sauve.

Not content with all that she had already done to intervene between the Queen of Navarre and those whom she held dear, the enchantress who had already won in succession the hearts of Henri de Navarre, François d'Alençon, and Henri de Guise, now determined upon the further capture of Harlay de Champvallon.

The jealousy of Marguerite now surpassed all the bounds of prudence ; the sound of her violent reproaches re-echoed loudly through the corridors of the Louvre, where all were laughing at her folly, since she herself it was who foolishly made known the fact that she was unable to retain her lover.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Disgrace of Marguerite

1583

During this time of frivolity and self-indulgence, during a part of which Marguerite retained Champvallon, who had left his wife in Sedan, in her own household, a crisis was approaching in the career of the Queen of Navarre.

It originated in part owing to the affairs of her brother d'Alençon. This Prince had been declared their Sovereign by the people of the Low Countries, with a long string of titles. They conferred four new Duchies upon him—those of Brabant, Lothier, Luxembourg, and Gueldre ; four great Counties—Flanders, Zelande, Holland, and Zutphen ; made him Marquis of the Holy Roman Empire, Seigneur of Friesland and Malines, and finally appointed François to the lofty position of Defender of Belgian Liberty.

All of these grand titles and appointments merely resulted in d'Alençon being without any real power in the Low Countries, where the people of the different parties, with the Prince of Orange at their head, looked with suspicion upon any foreign domination.

The power of Spain was, moreover, far from being broken down after the death of Don Juan of Austria, for

that able General, Alexander Farnese, Sovereign Duke of Parma, at the head of a large Spanish army, speedily advanced to reduce the malcontent Flemish States to their former state of dependence under Philip II.

In the year 1583, chafing at the impotence of his position as a ruler who was unable to rule, anxious, moreover, to prove his independence to his brother Henri III., who was secretly working against him, François endeavoured by a *coup de main* to obtain the actual possession of many of the larger cities of Flanders. He succeeded at Dunkirk and Ostend, but failed at Ghent, Bruges, and notably at Antwerp, in the attack upon which place François commanded in person.

William the Silent, Prince of Orange, had been warned in advance of the design to seize Antwerp, with the result that, when d'Alençon entered the town by one of the gates which he had secured, he lost two thousand of the four thousand men of which his force was composed. He did not himself show great courage, retiring to a safe position in the suburbs as soon as the Flemish inhabitants began to play upon his men with their artillery.

One of the causes of the growing unpopularity of François in Flanders had been the alliance which he had with Queen Elizabeth, who, although, after considerable dalliance upon his visits to England, she would not marry him, had helped him both with money and troops. The soldiers that she sent were badly commanded ; they roamed about the Netherlands in undisciplined bands, not only pillaging, but killing all the Catholic priests whom they met.

After his disaster at Antwerp François had shot his bolt in the Low Countries. He retired with the remainder of his force to the fortified city of Termonde,

where he received a bitter letter from his mother, Catherine de Médicis. "Would to God!" she said, "that you were dead! You could not then have caused the death of so many brave gentlemen." As for Henri III., he was delighted at his brother's failure, and took care to write at once to the Duke of Parma to disown any share in his schemes or enterprises.

All his fear of his brother had now gone. Henri III. had dreaded to see François supreme in Flanders, and would indeed much have preferred to see the authority of Philip II. maintained; and now he realised with joy that the brother whom he dreaded to see strong had been reduced to impotence. The King's *mignons* openly rejoiced and sneered at the Prince who had proved his ineptitude in the Low Countries, and Marguerite soon began to feel the effects of the downfall of the brother who was her second self.

Ever since the return of the Queen of Navarre to the Court of France she had been at cross-purposes with the two most powerful of the *mignons*. These were two young men whom the King had created respectively Duc de Joyeuse and Duc d'Epernon, favourites who, although excessively jealous of one another, joined hands in their antipathy to Marguerite de Valois.

For this hatred the injudicious Princess was herself in a great measure responsible, since she lost no opportunity of repeating aloud, in the most offensive manner, all that wiser persons at the Court merely dared to whisper concerning the inordinate affection shown by the King for his favourites, upon whom he wasted all the resources of the Kingdom.

For this spiteful feminine snapping, in which in her hatred of Henri III. Marguerite constantly indulged, she

was soon to be made to pay. Even before the time came when Henri took his public revenge upon his sister he commenced to treat her with scorn and neglect when he was informed by Joyeuse and d'Epernon of all they knew to her disadvantage. Above all, the King was furious when told by his two favourites that, far from endeavouring to persuade the King of Navarre to come to Paris, his sister was doing all in her power to keep her husband away.

While there had been a chance of d'Alençon becoming powerful enough to resent, possibly with an army at his back, any insult to his beloved sister, the cowardly Henri III. had held his hand. He now had no longer any cause for moderation towards Marguerite, the open immorality of whose life made of her such an easy object of attack.

Accounts as to the mode of the commencement of the quarrel of the King with his sister differ, one version being that it was by an attack being made upon Madame de Duras, one of Marguerite's favourite ladies, on account of her libertine life. This attack was violently resented by the Queen of Navarre, and the quarrel was begun. For a time, however, matters continued merely to simmer, as the King went off for a journey to Mézières, on the frontier. It was at this juncture that Champvallon, who had been in Flanders with François, left his wife at Sedan, and came to Marguerite in Paris to receive an appointment about her person, which gave an excuse for him to reside with her in her sumptuous abode.

Catherine de Médicis was also away from Paris, having gone to see the Duc d'Alençon, who had fallen very ill. So sick was he with lung disease that it seemed unlikely that he would recover; whereupon the Queen-

Mother had allowed her maternal feelings to get the upper hand of her recent anger, and she remained away until after the King had returned to Paris. Henri left again almost at once, and now it was that a very serious event took place, which caused the King strongly to suspect his sister of the assassination of one of his messengers. The Duc de Joyeuse had been sent away on a mission to Italy, and Henri III. sent off to him a courier bearing a very long letter written entirely in his own hand. Varillas is the authority for saying that this letter "contained odious things concerning his sister's conduct."

This messenger was attacked by four masked men, brutally murdered, and his despatches taken from him. Henri instantly returned to Paris, which he had barely left, and his fury surpassed all bounds. He, however, dissembled his wrath for a few days, until a favourable occasion for publicly wreaking it upon his sister's head should arise.

This occurred at a State ball at the Louvre, at which the Queen of Navarre represented the absent Queen-Mother, who was not far away, being now at Passy. Upon the night of August 7th, 1583, as the all-unsuspecting Marguerite was seated upon the Royal daïs, she saw the King, her brother, approaching her, followed by the Duc d'Epernon and all his favourites.

Standing in front of her, in a loud voice, so that all present could hear what he had to say, Henri III. then reproached his sister in unmeasured terms. He mentioned, in detail by name, all the different lovers that she had had since her marriage, he accused her of having had a son by Champvallon, and gave the dates and the places with such precision that, according to Busbecq, "he seemed to have been the witness of the deeds that he cited."

At the end of this horrible harangue, to which the humiliated Queen listened in a kind of stupor without finding a word to reply, the King shouted, "You have got nothing to do here; go off and rejoin your husband, and leave to-morrow."

As has been pointed out, whatever might have been the truth of his accusations, such an open and outrageous scandal came but ill from a man who led the basely licentious life of Henri III., a King who was the most degraded wretch who ever occupied the throne of France. His vengeance was not, however, yet accomplished. He endeavoured to seize Harlay de Champvallon that same night, but the Queen of Navarre's lover was too quick for him, and was already off for German soil as fast as horses could gallop.

Upon the following day, however, when Marguerite had left Paris and, according to Lestoille, "was going to sleep at Palaiseau, the King caused her to be followed by sixty archers of the Guard, under Larchant, who came to find her even in her bed." They seized Madame de Duras, and the Demoiselle de Béthune (a cousin of Sully), whose faces they slapped, and put them under arrest under charges of a disgraceful nature. Ten others of Marguerite's suite of both sex were also seized, and all were taken to the King at Montargis, where he personally examined them, one by one, as to his sister's misdeeds.

Marguerite's followers proved, however, faithful; they would say nothing to incriminate their mistress. Accordingly, with the notable exceptions of Madame de Duras and Mademoiselle de Béthune, the Queen of Navarre and most of her followers were allowed to proceed on their journey to Gascony.

The vengeance of Henri III. had gone so far as at first to confine some members of his sister's suite in the Bastille, and it would seem as if Madame de Duras and Mademoiselle de Béthune were among those incarcerated. Catherine de Médicis was, however, very angry when she learned of the public insult put by the King upon his sister, which she looked upon in the light of a terrible blunder, likely to alienate the King of Navarre. She accordingly contrived to persuade her son to release the prisoners from the Bastille.

The position of Marguerite was, however, a miserable one. No one knew in what direction she was wandering. She was without money, without friends, and by no means certain that her brother might not send off after her a second time and cause her death. The King, knowing that an account of what had happened must soon reach the ears of Henri de Navarre, had himself written off in a hurry to his brother-in-law, to inform him that he had expelled from his Court, on account of their immoralities and improprieties, Madame de Duras and Mademoiselle de Béthune, as pernicious vermin not fit to be near the person of the Queen of Navarre ; but he said nothing of his affront to his sister.

Naturally, upon receiving the news of his wife's public disgrace in the eyes of all Europe, Henri de Navarre declared flatly that he refused to receive his wife back at his own Court. She, meantime, was travelling about from one place to another, in the greatest condition of distress, of which she wrote to her mother, saying that she did not know if she wished to preserve her life, but begging her, at all events, to clear her honour after her death. It was, she said, so much associated with the Queen's own honour that she

would doubtless see the necessity for doing this. Marguerite recommended to her mother the care, after her death, of all the poor officers of her household, who, she said, owing to her continual condition of indigence, had for long remained unpaid. Finally, she said that she did not wish to prevent her enemies from taking her life, but that, if assured that her mother would take the necessary measures to ensure the rehabilitation of her character after her death, she would sign beforehand any papers that might be invented upon any other subject.

It is evident from what has already been recorded that, if Marguerite had enemies at this time—and that she had, with the King at their head, is of course a fact—she herself had been her own worst enemy, through the folly of her conduct. That did not prevent the fact of the frightful condition of distress in which her daughter was in from moving the bowels of compassion of Catherine, who could, however, do little to improve matters, beyond persuading her son to write new letters to the King of Navarre, to endeavour to gloss over that which he had already publicly proclaimed and privately written concerning his wife. She urged the King, therefore, to do all in his power to mitigate matters, and at the same time forwarded to her daughter the sum of two hundred thousand livres.

Henri's reply to the first letter which he received was humorously satirical. He thanked the King ironically for the care which he had taken of his wife's reputation, said that he had long known the scandalous lives led by "la Duras" and "la Béthune," but that he considered that, his wife having the honour of being under their Majesties' charge, it would have been quite an unnecessary action on his part to attempt to remedy from a distance that which

they were sure to be careful to remedy themselves, being on the spot.

Further letters soon arrived, attempting to make light of the outrageous incident of Marguerite's arrest by the archers when in bed at Palaiseau, and to beg the Béarnais to take back his wife. The arrest, the King now said, had been caused by the undue zeal of subordinate officers, while, with reference to the public outrage at the ball, he had now learned that what he had been told was false. The reply was a messenger, in the shape of Du Plessis-Mornay, from the King of Navarre, to demand boldly that Marguerite should be punished if she had behaved as the King had alleged, or, if she had not, then that due punishment should be meted out to those counsellors who had advised the King to act as he had done, to the great dishonour of the Royal Houses both of France and of Navarre.

It was in vain for Henri III. to shuffle and twist before the determined front of Du Plessis-Mornay. This courageous envoy told him plainly that the King of Navarre knew everything that had taken place, and added that "either his Majesty had done too much or too little—too much if the fault was less than extreme, too little if, considering the Queen worthy to lose her honour, he had permitted her to survive."

Henri III. did not know how to reply; eventually he said that he would go off to take the waters, and communicate with his brother François and the Queen-Mother on the subject, as they were equally concerned in the matter. As, however, it was essential that his Queen should present him with an heir, it was necessary that he and Queen Louise should delay no longer, but go in the autumn to take the waters, which were likely to prove efficacious, before making up his mind definitely; and so on.

Du Plessis did not flinch. "That will be rather a long time to wait," he remarked. "Your Majesty will be good enough to remember that the arrow is in the wound, and rankling there. What, Sire, will all Christianity say should the King of Navarre receive back his wife and embrace her, without any scruples, after all this scandal concerning her? How can he do so upon receiving her back all besmirched?"

"Why," answered Henri III., "of course he can reply that he will receive his King's sister. What else could he do?"

Nothing could be settled by Du Plessis-Mornay, but Henri de Navarre sent another messenger to the Court of France. This was Agrippa d'Aubigné, who spoke out so openly that it is a wonder that he did not lose his head.

Henri III., in return, sent Pomponne de Bellièvre to the Béarnais; but this clever young diplomatist found it by no means easy to accommodate matters. The fact was that Henri de Navarre, being at this time very much in love with the beautiful Diane d'Andouins, Comtesse de Gramont et Guiche, did not at all care to see his wife reappear at Nérac. Bellièvre remitted to him a letter from the King begging him to remember that the most virtuous princesses were not exempt from calumny, and that even his own mother, Jeanne d'Albret, had been talked about. Upon its receipt the Béarnais laughed loudly, and remarked to Bellièvre, so that all might hear: "The King does me great honour by his letters! in the first he calls me cuckold, in the last the son of a worthless woman" (Lestoille).

Marguerite meanwhile repaired to her city of Agen, and there remained.

CHAPTER XXIV

La belle Corisande

1580 *and Later*

THE love of Henri de Béarn for she who was known as La belle Corisande was one of which no Prince need be ashamed. This lady was possessed of both beauty and brains. She was disinterested in her love-affair with Henri, and endowed with a courageous disposition. Even if her virtue did not prove sufficiently strong to resist the dictates of her heart, excuses must be made for her on account of her other good qualities, and, above all else, we must take into consideration the age in which she lived. It was an epoch when that which would nowadays be looked upon as vice was merely regarded as a venial fault, merely worthy of a passing jest.

There was in the disposition of the Comtesse de Gramont et Guiche an innate nobility which raised her far above all the other mistresses of *le roi vert galant*, nor did she, like the celebrated Gabrielle d'Estrées, ever intermeddle with State affairs.

While the passion of Henri de Navarre for Diane d'Andouins was elevating in its nature, on account of the worth of its object, we will not go quite so far as a French author of the last century, who boldly asserts

that "she was one of those women who have never cost anything to the dignity of the Prince nor the prosperity of the State." For surely Henri sacrificed his dignity when, after gaining the battle of Coutras, instead of continuing the campaign, he hurried off to this amiable mistress with a bundle of captured flags. Moreover, if the prosperity of the State did not suffer upon this occasion, the Huguenot cause most certainly did. This circumstance must not, however, be attributed to any fault on the part of Corisande, but merely to the excessive love and consequent vanity of the King of Navarre.

Diane d'Andouins was the daughter of a noble gentleman whom Brantôme mentions as having been killed at the siege of Rouen near the Duc François de Guise. She was born in 1554, and consequently was a year younger than Henri de Navarre. When merely thirteen years of age the child was married to Philibert de Gramont et Toulongeon, Comte de Gramont, called also Comte de Guiche.

It was nine years after the consummation of this marriage, which took place on August 7th, 1567, that Henri de Navarre first met the young lady. The occasion was that of his going to take possession of his Governorship of Guyenne, when he considered it proper to visit Diane's husband, who was Governor of Bayonne and Sénéchal of Béarn, and had rendered various friendly services to his mother, Jeanne d'Albret. It has been supposed by many that the loves of Henri and she whom he called La belle Corisande date from this first meeting, but it was probably not so, otherwise the amours of Henri with this lady would have been carried on for the immense period, for this inconstant Prince, of twenty years.

There is indeed considerable doubt as to whether the connection had even commenced before the death of Philibert de Gramont. This gallant gentleman, who had been one of the favourites of Henri III., was a deadly enemy of Bussy d'Amboise. He was, like Bussy, a famous duellist, and in 1578, after killing a connection of Queen Louise de Vaudémont, as the result of a foolish quarrel about a page's walking-stick, he sought for a more Homeric combat. Gramont then, with three hundred gentlemen, challenged Bussy, with three hundred gentlemen, to mortal strife ; but this gigantic duel was prevented by the King, who feared lest his Court should be entirely depleted by these hot-headed nobles, who sought to destroy one another like so many Kilkenny cats.

Philibert de Gramont accordingly survived until the year 1580, when, in the month of August, we hear that " the Seigneur de Gramont, a Gascon of great valour and experience, had an arm carried away during some firing before La Fère."

This place, which, it will be remembered, belonged to Marguerite, was held by the Huguenots and attacked during the Lovers' War. We do not learn on which side Gramont was fighting, but, although a Gascon, it was probably on that of the King, as he had been a *mignon*. The fact is, however, immaterial ; what is important, while endeavouring to get at dates, is that, after the action at La Fère, we hear of him no more. We may, therefore, conclude that the cannon-ball which carried away his arm cut off his life as well.

Now Sully mentions the King as being at the height of his amour with Corisande in 1583. In his *Économies royales*, vol. i., he says : " The King of Navarre was then

at the hottest of his amorous passion for the Comtesse de Guiche, to meet whom he made a journey to a place called Ageman."

We should prefer to be on the side of those who consider that the connection of La belle Corisande with Henri was not, at its commencement, an adulterous one on her side, but that she was a fair young widow, at liberty to dispose of her person as she chose. Unfortunately, against this supposition, we have the famous *Mémoires du Comte de Gramont*. In this book we find the Chevalier de Gramont distinctly claiming to his friend Matta to be the grandson of Henri IV. He remarks regretfully, while speaking of his father, that Henri IV. wanted by all means to recognise him as his son, " but never would that traitor of a man consent thereto. Just see what the Gramonts missed by that stroke of bad luck! They would have had precedence over the Césars de Vendôme." The Chevalier here refers to the two sons, offspring of Gabrielle d'Estrées, legitimatised by Henri IV., and endowed with Royal rank. These were the Duc (César) de Vendôme and the Chevalier de Vendôme.

The father of the Chevalier de Gramont was Antoine, the son of La belle Corisande, and various other authors mention him as being the son of Henri de Navarre. One of these, in his remarks upon *Les Amours du grand Alcandre*, that scandalous work concerning Henri IV. by the Princesse de Conti, tells a very ridiculous story in relation to this matter. He says that the Duc d'Orléans, the second son of Henri IV., by his second wife, Marie de Médicis, always claimed Antoine de Gramont as his brother. One day he said to the Comte, who had then been made a Duc by his elder brother, Louis XIII. : " You know you are my brother, Antoine, for my father

and your mother shared the same couch." "Yes," replied de Gramont, "that's true ; but what you don't know is that there was always a log (*une bûche*) between them." After that the Duc d'Orléans usually called him his Brother Log (*Frère Bûche*).

Whether recognised as Brother Log or no, Antoine de Gramont always refused to accept from Henri IV. the questionable honour of being publicly recognised as his son ; he told the King bluntly that he preferred "to be a gentleman to a King's bastard."

From the above it will be seen that there will always remain the difficulty concerning this question of the paternity of the only son born to Corisande in wedlock, to prevent those who would like to think of her as having been a virtuous spouse from being sure of the fact. That after she became a widow she bore a child, who died in childhood, to Henri de Navarre, is, however, known for a fact.

How deeply Henri loved Corisande is testified by the circumstance that he gave to his mistress a promise of marriage signed with his blood. His followers, however, and notably d'Aubigné, who quarrelled with the mistress as much as he did with the wife, could not bear to see their master engaging in this soft dalliance with the Comtesse de Gramont in her château at Pau. Not infrequently d'Aubigné, honest fellow that he was, boldly incurred the displeasure of the King of Navarre by telling him that he would do far better to leave the ivory arms of his lady-love to lead his followers more often to the field of glory.

Henri, however, was as obstinate as d'Aubigné, and he considered that there was an appointed time for everything, for love-making as for fighting. The time for

each he chose to select for himself, and, although he contrived to pass the greater part of his life in the one occupation or the other, not all the remonstrances of his trusty followers proved of much avail in causing him to curtail the hours devoted to Venus in order to yield a greater tribute to Mars.

At length, however, a new war commenced between the Huguenots and the Catholics. This was in the year 1586. This conflict is termed by d'Aubigné the War of the Barricades ; other historians denote it under the heading of the War of the Three Henris ; that is to say, Henri III., Henri de Navarre, and Henri de Guise.

It was the last who was the primary cause of the war. Being backed up in his designs by the Queen-Mother, he forced the King to suspend all the old Edicts of Tolerance which had been granted to the Huguenots. They were requested to return their places of surety, and to change their religion within six months or suffer confiscation of all their goods. Not finding this latter proviso sufficiently severe, the Duc de Guise and his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, next compelled the King to limit the time allowed to the Huguenots in which to renounce their faith to only fifteen days.

Henri de Navarre had already for some time past succeeded to the position of heir to the Crown of France, as not only had François, Duc d'Alençon, d'Anjou, de Brabant, and half a dozen other places, died miserably of consumption in 1584, but Queen Louise de Vaudémont still showed no signs of bearing children to Henri III.

The King, who was terrified of the power of the ultra-Catholic League, with the Guises at its head and the support of Philip II. behind it, had already sought for the help of Henri de Navarre, who had very recently

loyally informed his brother-in-law of propositions made to him by Spain to join in making war upon Henri III.

Philip II., who had already had four wives, had at the same time requested the hand of Catherine de Bourbon, the young Protestant Princess of Navarre, who had declined the honour of marrying the King of the Inquisition.

While asking for the King of Navarre's help, Henri III. had made a proviso; this was that he should change his religion and come to the Court of France to assume his proper place as heir to the throne. The King well knew that, should his brother-in-law accede to this request, the wind would be entirely taken out of the sails of the Duc de Guise and the League.

When the King of Navarre declined to agree, the weak King had no choice but to accept all that the League proposed. He did so the more readily, perhaps, owing to the fact that his favourite *mignon*, Joyeuse, favoured the League, although his other favourite, the Duc d'Epernon, was inclined towards the Politique, or Moderate Catholic, party, and boldly proposed to the King to make war upon the League, and snap his figures at their proposals. The counsels of the Duc de Joyeuse, however, prevailed, and the King not only gave him his sister-in-law, Marguerite de Vaudémont, in marriage, but an immense sum of money as well. In order that d'Epernon should not be jealous, Henri III. at the same time gave him a large marriage portion, although the wife to whom he caused d'Epernon to be affianced had not yet reached a marriageable age.

All was going on with the usual frivolity at the Court of France, where, in spite of his cares, Henri III. still wasted the substance of the State in extravagant festivities in honour of his favourites, still played at cup-and-ball,

wore baskets containing small puppies hanging from his neck, and surrounded himself with parrots, dogs, monkeys, and finally human dwarfs.

When the fact became known to the Huguenots that the King had capitulated to the League it was evident that there must be war, unless the Protestant party would allow itself to be entirely rooted out of France and Navarre.

Du Plessis-Mornay wrote an eloquent appeal to Queen Elizabeth for assistance, and at the same time war was declared against the League in the name of the King of Navarre, Henri, Prince de Condé, and of the Politique leader Damville, now become Maréchal Duc de Montmorency. This latter declared that he refused to become a tool in the hands of the Guises, the enemies of his House, and for that reason should join the Protestants. There were many other Catholic nobles who also withdrew themselves from the Holy League, which they had formerly joined, from hatred of the Guise faction and disgust at the manner in which it was trampling upon the Crown.

Having sketched the events which led up to the war, we cannot follow it out in all its details, but must mention that, during its continuance, the loving Comtesse de Gramont showed herself possessed of a valiant and self-sacrificing spirit. She owned large estates; these she mortgaged, her ample supply of jewellery was put in pawn, and the proceeds went towards providing men and horses for her lover. Hers was a love which shrank from no sacrifice, and, realising this, the gratitude of Henri knew no bounds. Had he but been free of his wife, Marguerite, he would undoubtedly have redeemed his debt to the Comtesse by marrying her.

In the beginning of March 1586, the King of Navarre



HENRI DE BOURBON, PRINCE DE CONDE
(From an old print after Janet)

gained a success over the Maréchal de Matignon. When he caused this doughty warrior to raise the siege of a place called Castel, Henri captured several of the enemy's standards. He could not resist flying off to see his lady-love and to receive her congratulations upon his success, and then—for the first time—he took her, as a trophy, the captured colours.

In that same year, 1586, the King of Navarre was so carried away by his ever-increasing passion for Corisande that he determined, by any available means, to get rid of his wife and carry out the promise he had made of marriage with his fair paramour. The Vicomte de Turenne and d'Aubigné were both exceedingly grieved, and both showed their disapprobation.

The difference, however, in the conduct of the two was marked. "Le bon amy," as d'Aubigné calls Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, shrank from openly expressing all that he thought, and took advantage of an excuse to absent himself in order to avoid the disagreeable task. The courageous Agrippa, on the other hand, flinched at nothing. The "fidèle serviteur," as he calls himself, accordingly remained behind when Turenne left, and soon tackled his master in his usual downright fashion.

He had a good opportunity given him when, one morning, Henri de Navarre entertained his faithful follower for more than two hours at a stretch with a disquisition upon "some thirty ancient and modern Princes who had found themselves happy after having married, for their pleasure, persons of less condition than themselves." He next proceeded to expound to d'Aubigné the folly of seeking grand alliances, and the iniquity of those who possessed a passionate nature and yet married without passion.

D'Aubigné gave his master plenty of rope, but when he had listened for a good two hours and a half he had his own innings. Then, if the honest historian only said half that he tells us he did, he certainly gave Henri plenty of good reasons why he should not marry the Comtesse de Gramont.

"Those examples, Sire," he remarked, "are fine and useless for you, for the Princes you name were in a peaceful condition, not hunted about, not wanderers like you, of whom the soul and the State have no other support than your good renown. You ought to consider, Sire, that in you are four conditions, which make so many differences: Henri, the King of Navarre, the Successor to the Crown, and the Protector of the Churches. Each of these four persons has his separate servitors, whom you must pay in different coinage, according to their separate functions. You owe it to those who serve Henri to commit Henri, that is to say, the estates of your House; to the servants of the King of Navarre you owe the offices of your Sovereignty; to those who follow the Heir-apparent you must pay in hope, since hope attracts them, and by its fair appearance entices them to the monster of your fortunes.

"But the reward of those who serve the Protector of the Churches is hard for a Prince. It is zeal, good actions, integrity, payment of those who are your servitors in any respect—among others, are your companions—but upon the condition that they leave you the smallest share of the dangers that they can, but all the honours and advantages of the war."

When once d'Aubigné was fairly started he was nearly as long-winded as Henri himself, but he was not altogether without a sense of diplomacy. Accordingly,

after speaking roughly to his master at first, he let him down easy, was careful to make excuses for the King's passion, and, far from blaming it, encouraged it, upon conditions. These were that, instead of finding in his amours the excuse for idleness, dalliance, and soft repose, he should show himself worthy of his mistress, use his love as a source of inspiration to noble deeds and victory in the field. When the war should be finished, and the victory attained, he might then marry his mistress ; it might be even a laudable action, but he must promise to delay the thoughts of the marriage for two years.

D'Aubigné was cunning in asking for this two years' delay, for he thought that a good deal might happen in that time to divert his master's thoughts into other channels, as indeed did.

Some of his advice, however, was really excellent and straightforward. Such was, for instance : "Like the Councils which you shun, employ the most favourable time for necessary action ; overcome little domestic vices which injure you. Then, when you are victorious over both the enemy and your poverty, you can follow the example of those Princes whom you talk about, for your condition will resemble theirs."

The King of Navarre thanked d'Aubigné for his advice, and swore, on his oath, not to think of marrying the Comtesse for the space of two years.

CHAPTER XXV

Marguerite Queen of Agen

1585

It had not been until after endless negotiations between Henri III. and his brother-in-law that the latter, in the spring of 1584, had agreed to take back his wife. The astute King of Navarre was clever enough to make a good bargain with the King of France over this matter of receiving once more the Princess whose reputation had so ruthlessly been taken away by her own brother. It was not until Henri III. had complied with the request to remove the garrisons of the Maréchal de Matignon from the cities of Condom, Agen, and Bazus that Henri wrote: "I will go to Nérac, to receive my wife there."

Henri III. was delighted with Pomponne de Bellièvre, who had conducted the negotiations which led to the settlement of the matter, for he had long since realised what a fool he had made of himself by the brutal manner in which he had conducted himself towards Marguerite. Before this Princess left her refuge at Agen, to be reconciled with her husband at Nérac, Catherine de Médicis considered it necessary to write her daughter a long letter of advice as to her future conduct.

After telling the Queen of Navarre that the company that she might keep would either affect her honourably

or dishonourably, Catherine administered to Marguerite some casuistic advice concerning the points to be observed by "a princess who was young, and who considered herself beautiful. Above all, she should not again make too much of those with whom her husband should indulge in love-affairs, for he will think that she will be very glad to have him loving something else, so that she can do the same on her side. Nor should she again allow him to indulge in amours in her household, with her ladies and her girls—never should woman who loves her husband love his paramour."

From this letter it will be noticed that Catherine de Médicis excelled in giving advice which she had never followed herself, since who had been more intimate with her husband's paramour than she herself with Diane de Poitiers ?

The meeting between husband and wife took place at Porte-Sainte-Marie in the middle of April 1584, the separation having lasted a couple of years. We can imagine that it was not without a certain amount of trepidation that Marguerite returned to the bosom of her family, especially as Pibrac, who had caused his mistress's horoscope to be drawn, had some time previously informed her that she would die by her husband's hand.

Marguerite arrived first at the place of rendezvous, to which she had travelled in her golden litter. When Henri arrived in turn at the house where she had descended, he kissed her without a word. Then they mounted together to a first-floor room, and, after showing themselves to the people from a window, retired together to the back of the apartment for half an hour. Then the journey to Nérac was continued, Henri riding by his wife's side and conversing amiably with her.

There they arrived at four o'clock ; but that Marguerite was by no means happy upon that day of her return is evident, from the relation of an envoy from the Prince de Condé, who was then present at Nérac.

This gentleman was named Michel de la Huguerye, and, from his Memoirs, it will be noticed that the Secretary du Pin, who had formerly been so antagonistic to the Queen of Navarre, was back again in her husband's service. This in itself would be felt as a humiliation by the prodigal Queen upon her return to the fold of Navarre.

Condé's envoy relates : " Shortly after I had left the Sieur du Pin the King and the Queen, his wife, arrived. They remained alone, walking up and down the gallery of the château until the evening, where I saw this Princess repeatedly burst into tears, in such a manner that, when they were at table, where I watched them, it being late and by candle-light, I never saw a face more bathed in tears nor eyes more reddened. And I felt great pity for this Princess, seeing her seated by her husband's side, who listened to all kinds of foolish conversation from the gentlemen who were about him, without either he or any one else addressing a word to the Princess. This made me well believe that which du Pin had already told me, to the effect that it was only by force that he had received her.

La Huguerye says further that, having withdrawn without having been noticed by the King of Navarre, he foresaw that the reconciliation could scarcely last long. In spite, however, of being treated so cavalierly at first, Marguerite, for whom, in spite of her faults, we can but feel sorry, thought fit to bravely put a good face on the matter in writing to her mother. She informed

Catherine that "her husband and friends" had received her with good cheer, and that she herself remained contented.

Henri, however, bore malice against his wife, and, as prophesied by La Huguerye, the reconciliation proved only a sham. There was the greater reason for this from the fact that, Marguerite being now in disgrace at the Court of France, Henri could find her of no further use to him in the forwarding of his plans. Then followed the death of François d'Alençon, in June 1584, and, as a result, the greatly altered situation of Henri de Navarre, who had become heir to the French throne. At the same time, the loss of her brother was a terrible blow to Marguerite, as the two had always backed each other up, and by his death she lost her sole remaining support at the Court.

The Queen of Navarre now realised how helpless she had become, for shortly after her return to Nérac the Duc d'Epernon, one of the *mignons* who had backed up Henri III. in the disgraceful scene at the Louvre, arrived on a mission to Nérac. Before his arrival she had declared that on no account would she receive the King's *mignon*, her deadly enemy; rather, she said, would she withdraw herself from her husband's Court during his visit. Such pressure was, however, put upon the helpless Queen, both by the Queen-Mother and her husband, that she was forced to give way. The result was that, according to Brantôme, when the Duc arrived "she disguised her feelings so that, upon M. d'Epernon arriving in her chamber, she received him in the same way as the King had begged her; so well, indeed, that all present were filled with astonishment."

Constant quarrels ensued between the husband and

wife. Henry, indeed, was frequently absent at Pau with his beloved Corisande, and Marguerite was thus left alone at Nérac. When the King was, however, present, he refused to treat her as his wife.

Lestoille says that, after her return, he never once shared the same couch with her, and further, that he accused her of seeking to get rid of him by poison, to be administered by a certain Secretary, named Ferrand, sent to Pau for the purpose.

Henri caused this Ferrand to be arrested; but, although the German Ambassador Busbecq relates, as a fact, this attempted poisoning—even going so far as to say that the poison was not strong enough, when Ferrand used a pistol without result—the Duc de Bouillon tells another story.

He puts down the comings and goings of Ferrand to the secret intelligence of Marguerite with the Duc de Guise and the League, "in the practices of which the Queen Marguerite evidently participated," and says that he himself counselled Ferrand's arrest.

Ferrand was, however, a French subject, and, accordingly, when Henri III. and Catherine learned of his arrest on Navarrese soil, they raised such an outcry that the Secretary had to be released.

A great quarrel took place in the early part of 1585, when the confidante of Marguerite, the wife of the Maréchal de Matignon, made known to her husband a plot in which the Queen of Navarre was engaged with Philip II. to retire to Spain. We need not go into this affair beyond saying that Philip intended to obtain a divorce for Marguerite, and to make use of her in some way to dispute, later, the succession of her husband to the French Crown. It, however, occasioned a consider-

able sensation both in France and Navarre, and it was only after de Bellièvre arrived once more, as mediator, that matters were arranged, and Marguerite promised "to love her husband, and to continue to live with him."

Meanwhile, even in Paris, the League was gaining power, and the conduct of Henri III. was such as daily to make himself more detested by the people. His constant public observance of religious ceremonies and processions imposed on nobody, especially when, under the cloak of religion, "he did not cease from going to see the little nuns, would not stir from their convents and abbeys, and made love to them."

As the power of the League increased, and as Marguerite found herself more and more neglected, so did she get closer into touch with, her old lover, the Duc de Guise.

At length, as we have already related, the King of Navarre sent messengers to Paris, in reply to the embassy of d'Epernon, to say that he would not change his religion.

This gave the Leaguers the chance for which they had been waiting. They declared Charles, Cardinal de Bourbon, the uncle of the King of Navarre, the heir to the throne; while the uncle himself published a manifesto against his nephew, saying that the Kingdom would never accept a relapsed heretic as its King.

Marguerite declared herself for the League; that is to say, she placed herself on the side of the party which was opposed both to her detested brother, Henri III., and, her more than casual husband, Henri de Navarre.

Now happened an event which might have caused a disastrous end to Marguerite, had it not been for the

humanity and good sense of her old opponent, Agrippa d'Aubigné. Henri de Navarre's mistress, the Comtesse de Gramont, is said to have been at the bottom of the affair of the accusation of Marguerite in connection with Ferrand. Corisande is supposed, very naturally, to have stirred up Henri to get rid of his wife upon this occasion, in order that he might redeem the promise of marriage he had given her. The accusation was brought before the Council of Navarre, when d'Aubigné defended Marguerite, whom he by no means liked. He himself tells us, in his *Mémoires*, that the advice of all was to put the Queen of Navarre to death; but that he caused the Council to change their decision, "for which the King, her husband, greatly thanked me."

Marguerite at length determined to take advantage of the troubles being caused by the League, who were about to rise in arms, to effect her escape from her husband's Court, where she was not wanted.

She had already, with considerable sagacity and military judgment, laid her plans in Agen, where she had made herself very popular by endowing the Jesuits, and had likewise contrived to get rid of her brother's troops. After her return to Nérac she kept up her good relations with the people of Agen, and it would seem, from what Brantôme says, that she had it in her head, after retiring to that place, to declare herself the heir to the Crown of France, in the place of her husband, by procuring the revocation of the Salic Law.

At length, at Easter 1585, Marguerite demanded from the Béarnais the permission to go and take the Easter Sacraments at Agen. He by no means objected, but said smilingly: "Go by all means, my dear; and don't forget to pray for me."

With a suite of only a few gentlemen and ladies, the Queen of Navarre accordingly arrived at Agen ; but no sooner had she arrived than all the Catholic nobility of the neighbourhood flocked to her banner. Then, while neither Matignon, watching the place in the King's interests, nor Henri de Navarre knew what she was about, Marguerite raised troops, and then more troops, until she had quite a respectable garrison.

Having done this, she established her Sovereignty definitely by compelling the burghers to deliver over into her charge the keys of the gates of the city. Having obtained the keys, Marguerite's next move was to make all the inhabitants swear fealty to her, while declaring that Agen and all Agenais was hers, and that she intended to reign and govern there. Her next move was to raise yet other companies of troops, both cavalry and infantry, and then to send for her two former favourites, Madame de Duras and Mademoiselle de Béthune. She had already entrusted the military command of the city to the husband of the former, the Vicomte de Duras.

Marguerite received considerable assistance in her various manœuvres from the Seigneur de Lignerac, who was the Bailli of the Mountains of Auvergne. Of this noble, who brought to her aid a fine body of cavalry, she soon made a conquest, and, with the encouragement of this enterprising lover, she went yet further. The Queen of Navarre now asserted her independence of her husband ; she no longer called him King of Navarre, but only the Prince of Béarn, while all her own acts, deeds, appointments, and proclamations she signed, in right Royal style, as "Marguerite de France."

The independence of Marguerite de France having been thus established with but little difficulty, this

Sovereign of Agenais next proceeded to wage war upon her husband. Unfortunately, her attempts at the conquest of various cities proved unsuccessful, and when she had actually captured Mézeray, the garrison that she had left in the place was cut to pieces by the King of Navarre.

In front of the strong city of Villeneuve Marguerite appeared with her troops in person, and actually occupied a part of the defences. It was only owing to the foolish action of her followers that she did not obtain possession of this place before, owing to a clever ruse on the part of the defenders, her army was led to believe that the whole of the forces of the King of Navarre had come to join with the garrison in a counter-attack. The Queen rapidly retired upon Agen with her forces, and lost many men of her rear-guard in the retreat.

To follow out in detail this petty war, in which Marguerite was engaged at the same time with the Royal troops of Matignon and the Huguenot forces of Navarre, would be tedious. It is sufficient to say that before long Marguerite's sway did not extend more than a league beyond the walls of Agen. Here she might for long have remained supreme had it not been for her folly in making her Principal Minister of the disreputable Vicomtesse de Duras. This unprincipled and immoral woman placed such heavy taxes on the inhabitants that they were before long reduced to beggary. Not content with these exactions, the soldiers were allowed to pillage the burghers at will, the only crime punished by Marguerite being that of three soldiers whom she caused to be hanged for an act of outrage upon an unfortunate woman in her husband's presence. To add to the misfortunes of the inhabitants of Agen, they were

now decimated by the ravages of the plague. Marguerite, however, caused the gates to be closed, and would not allow a single person to escape from the city. She persisted in calmly asserting that the plague was a myth, only invented by the citizens in order to induce her to leave Agen with her troops.

At this period (July 1585) her friend, the Duc de Guise, and the Leaguers, who had been in arms against Henri III., came to the arrangement with the King called the Peace of Nemours. Marguerite's position now appeared to be strengthened, as by this treaty all Princes attached to the League were absolved from the consequences of their recent warlike actions. It was now only from the forces of the Huguenots that Marguerite imagined that she had anything to fear, and, upon the advice of Lignerac, she determined to strengthen her position against both the King of Navarre and her own subjects, who had been driven to a state bordering upon rebellion.

Now it was that one of the most arbitrary actions of her short reign in Agen took place—it was, in fact, one of the most arbitrary actions of any reign. The Queen of Navarre determined to erect a citadel which should dominate the river Garonne and the country towards Nérac and, at the same time, be in a position to fire upon the town itself. She proposed to make this citadel occupy the site of more than a quarter of the city. In order to be constructive, the military ideas of this Royal lady were primarily destructive. After the fashion of Cheops when building the large Pyramid of Gizeh, Marguerite ordered all of her people to turn out to work without pay. With pick and shovel they were commanded to knock down

their own residences. The work was going on gaily, several of the principal streets had been levelled with the ground, when the worm turned. The people went secretly to the Maréchal de Matignon, and asked him to attack the city. He was afraid to do this, lest one day he might have to suffer from the vengeance of Marguerite, as Biron had already felt the weight of her displeasure for his little pleasantry at Nérac. Nevertheless, knowing that he would have the King behind him, Matignon authorised the people of Agen to rise, provided that they should offer no violence "to the Queen of Navarre, to whom all honour and respect was due, or to her ladies." They rose accordingly, and, after a bloody struggle, Marguerite was compelled to fly on the croup of a horse behind her lover, Lignerac..

CHAPTER XXVI

The Flags of Coutras

1587

In the year 1587 King Henri III. made a great show of a warlike spirit. He declared to the people of Paris, when asking them for money, which, upon their refusal, he took, that he would go to the wars himself, and die if required.

Henri had indeed the intention of going to the war, but it was more with the desire of preventing the aggrandisement of the Guises, and to delay their operations, than with any view of crushing the Politique-Huguenot combination.

Accordingly, having annexed by force the *rentes* of the Hôtel de Ville, he did not devote any of the funds so unlawfully seized to the improvement of the forces under the respective commands of the Ducs de Guise and Mayenne.

On the contrary, he devoted the greater part of it to a series of extravagant fêtes to celebrate the marriage of his favourite, d'Epernon, to whom he had now given, as a wife, the young Comtesse de Foix-Candale.

Joyeuse, the rival of d'Epernon, was away from the Louvre, having been given command of an army, with which he captured several small Protestant towns, whose

inhabitants he butchered after their surrender. D'Epernon was accordingly now in the ascendant, and the King, to show his love for his *mignon*, spared absolutely no expense.

At the time that Joyeuse had been married to one of the King's sisters-in-law, Henri III. had also caused d'Epernon to be betrothed to another girl of the Lorraine family of Vaudémont. Although too young for marriage, this child's dowry of four hundred thousand golden crowns had been paid to d'Epernon, Joyeuse having received a similar amount. The King had, since that date, declared his hatred of everything to do with Guise or Lorraine, and consequently provided his *mignon* d'Epernon with another wife, to whom he presented a necklace of a hundred pearls, each of which cost a thousand crowns. At the same time he presented d'Epernon with a second marriage portion, of the same amount as that which he had already received.

Guise, very unwillingly, attended the wedding, and, to his great disgust, was a witness of the manner in which the sinews of war were being dissipated. Nor was the disgust of this Prince of the House of Lorraine lessened when Henri III. commanded him and the bridegroom to embrace. These two deadly enemies obeyed the command, but only hated each other all the more after having given to one another the supposed kiss of friendship.

Joyeuse now left his army, in order to obtain the King's favour once more, and in his absence the King of Navarre and the Vicomte de Turenne (afterwards Duc de Bouillon) gained several small successes. The Duc de Joyeuse, however, swearing that he would bring back the heads of the two Henris, of Condé and Navarre,

soon went back to his command, followed by all the magnificent young nobles of the Court. With the utmost gaiety and splendour, this pleasure-party of pleasure-loving gentlemen set forth upon their enterprise, in the early autumn of 1587.

The King of Navarre and Turenne had, however, greatly improved their forces while Joyeuse had been away; two notable recruits also came over to the Huguenot side. These were the two Catholic brothers of the Prince de Condé, the Prince de Conti and the Comte de Soissons, which latter we have already mentioned as the lover of Catherine of Navarre. The King of Navarre was expecting a large force of Germans and Swiss to join him on the upper waters of the river Loire, when he found that Joyeuse, being about to effect a junction with the Maréchal de Matignon, would in all probability be strong enough to crush his forces while on the way to join the Germans. He endeavoured, therefore, at first to elude Joyeuse, when he found that this giddy young noble was following him without waiting to be joined by Matignon.

A race was now run between advance-parties of the two forces to secure the passage of the river Dronne, near Coutras, on the confines of Guyenne and Angoumais. In this race to the river Dronne, Henri de Navarre's lieutenant, La Tremouille, just beat de Lavardin, who belonged to the army of Joyeuse. A fight took place between the two parties, but the Huguenots succeeded in holding the passage of the river, indeed of the two rivers, the Dronne and the Isle, which join at Coutras.

Henri de Navarre, following his lieutenant, threw the greater portion of his baggage across the river. His intention being to wait for Joyeuse on the other side, his

artillery was being sent after the baggage when he learned that Joyeuse was rapidly advancing. Bringing back his artillery, although his forces were far less in numbers than those of the King of France, Henri placed his guns —he had but three—in position, and waited for the enemy.

The night of October 19th, 1587, was passed in making preparations, and in the morning, to please the Huguenot pastors present with his force, Henri de Navarre made a public avowal of his penitence for the immoralities of his life.

The army of Joyeuse not only excelled in numbers but in the splendour of the armour and accoutrements of those by whom it was composed. The light-hearted young nobles who had followed the King's *mignon* were, however, with their horses, covered with useless articles of satin and gold embroidery, which glistened in the morning sun.

Discipline and knowledge of warfare were, however, on the side of the Béarnais, whose military genius was, moreover, of an entirely different calibre from the strategic knowledge of the brave but frivolous young Duc de Joyeuse.

Just as the battle commenced, by the first discharges of the artillery of the Royal army, the men of Navarre threw themselves on their knees, while the pastors led off with a psalm, in which all joined. The nobles of the Catholic army laughed gaily: "They are afraid, the wretches—they fall on their knees to beg for mercy!"

At this moment Henri addressed his cousin Condé, who had previously shown considerable signs of jealousy of him, and also young Soissons. "My cousins," quoth he, "bear in mind this day the Bourbon stock to which

you belong. With God's help, I will show you that I am your senior and head of that House." To this Condé replied, "And we will show you that we are your worthy juniors."

The battle then commenced, when not all the useless gallantry of the Catholic nobles, who charged valiantly, could avail against the steadiness and discipline of the soldiers of Navarre. "Courage, men!" cried Henri, pointing to the glittering ranks of the advancing foe, "every one of you shall ride home on a trained charger, and be served on silver plate."

He caused his men to wait patiently, and his arquebusmen to fire only as the enemy's line of battle was forced to advance uphill to the attack—for Henri had chosen his ground well. Many of the gallant riders fell from the musketry fire and the discharges of the three guns, which were well handled by the Baron de Rosny, afterwards Duc de Sully.

Then, when Joyeuse and his already shaken cavaliers were at but a short distance, the gallant Henri de Navarre raised himself in his stirrups, waved his sword over his head, and gave the command to charge. Like a rushing avalanche, the Huguenots hurled themselves down the hill behind the King of Navarre! As the sound of thunder was the crash when they burst in upon the line of gold-bedizened Royal troops!

For a short space the confusion and the carnage were terrible on the side of the Catholics, who went down by hundreds, while the Protestants hardly suffered at all. Only one hour after the commencement of the engagement the battle was ended. The remainder of the army of Joyeuse was in headlong flight. But their leader, where was he? where his brother also, and all their gay

young nobles who had ridden out from the Court in such brave attire ?

The majority were dead ! Joyeuse, four hundred nobles, and two thousand men lay lifeless upon the bloody field of Coutras. Many prisoners were likewise taken, and held for ransom by their captors. Of the Huguenot army merely forty men had fallen—never had there been so complete a victory at so small a cost. And how did the conqueror follow up this glorious success ? Alas ! although many have sought to palliate his conduct, to account for it by the rainy weather, or the fact that his men, laden with booty, wished to go home, there remains but the truth.

That truth, says d'Aubigné, was "that he sacrificed the fruits of his victory to love." Deaf to the murmurs of his army, which was triumphant with success, deaf, likewise, to the reproaches of his cousin, Henri de Condé, who was burning to go ahead, the victor of Coutras disbanded the larger part of his army. Having collected all the enemy's captured standards, Henri de Navarre compromised all the results of the campaign by riding off with them, as a present to his mistress Corisande, at Pau.

This was the second gift of flags he made her, but, whereas the presentation of those taken at Castel had no bearing upon the course of the war, his vainglorious action in riding off with the standards of Coutras had serious results, including that of costing the lives of several thousand of his German allies.

While waiting for the King of Navarre upon the Loire, and cursing him for not coming to join them, the Germans were surprised by the Duc de Guise, and lost two thousand of their number. As for the Swiss, in

order to prevent Guise from having any further chances of success, Henri III., who had taken the field, bought them off. The King offered them four hundred thousand crowns to go home. They took the money, and went. The remains of the Germans only reached their own frontiers after enduring untold miseries. Their route was strewn with men dead from starvation, disease, or wounds inflicted by the peasantry ; all of their baggage and provisions were lost. The Protestant army was nearly destroyed.

There were a considerable number of French Huguenots with the Germans, and with part of the remnants of this force the King's troops came in contact. Henri III., fearful lest Guise should enhance the glory of his Massacre of Auneau, which was the result of foul treachery, offered amnesty, after the conflict, to both Germans and Frenchmen, upon the condition of their vowing to take arms against him no more. The Prince de Conti and Coligny's brave son, the Comte de Châtillon, endeavoured to persuade the disorganised troops to refuse this offer and fight, but without avail. Thereupon, while Conti escaped in disguise, Châtillon made good his retreat with the men of Languedoc. After infinite sufferings, during which the Protestant Duc de Bouillon, father-in-law of Turenne, died, some of these reached Geneva in safety.

After this success Henri III. returned in triumph to Paris, where, in full armour, he offered up thanks for his victory at Notre-Dame. It was a victory which, had not Henri de Navarre hurried off with his flags to the Comtesse de Gramont after his own brilliant triumph at Coutras, could never have been celebrated by the effeminate King of France.

Sully, who is always as ready to make excuses for his master's faults as Aubigné to condemn them, endeavours to explain away the retreat of the Béarnais to the arms of his paramour by throwing part of the blame upon the young Comte de Soissons. He pretends that it was chiefly because this ardent lover was impatient to throw himself once again at the feet of his fair cousin, Catherine de Bourbon, that the King of Navarre returned with him to Béarn. He has, however, the honesty to own that the passion of the Béarnais for the Comtesse de Guiche, "and his vanity in wishing to present to her the ensigns, cornets, and other spoils of the enemy," had considerable weight in causing the King of Navarre to accede to his cousin's entreaties. While Henri, followed by an escort of cavalry, retired with his twenty-two flags —to make, as some say, bed-spreads for his mistress—the Vicomte de Turenne remained in the field with the small body of troops that had not been disbanded.

CHAPTER XXVII

Marguerite, Queen of Hearts, and of Usson

1585 *and Later*

François de Lignerac, behind whom Marguerite made her hurried exit on horseback from Agen, was a brutal man of detestable character, and an ardent follower of the League. The Bailli des Montagnes d'Auvergne was, however, a good soldier; and, had it not been for the fact that, during the confusion attending the blowing up of the Jacobin convent, of which Marguerite had made her arsenal, he had recaptured one of the gates of the city, the Queen of Agen could never have escaped. In the end, it was owing to the arrival to join in the fighting of a lieutenant of Matignon, with Royal troops, that the *bourgeoisie* gained a complete victory, and the flight became a *sauve qui peut*.

The condition of Marguerite was indeed miserable during her flight. There had been no time to procure a pillion; thus she had to ride a-straddle for two days, with the result that all the skin was flayed from her legs. No horses could be procured for half of her women and girls, who straggled after their mistress on foot, "some without mask, others without apron, and all in such pitiable condition that they rather resembled

a parcel of soldiers' camp-followers than the daughters of good houses."

For two days the rapid flight continued to the fortress of Carlat, in Auvergne. This place, like Agen, belonged to Marguerite, and its Governor, Robert Gilbert, Seigneur de Marcé, was Lignerac's brother. He came to meet the fugitives with five hundred gentlemen, but long before his arrival they had out-distanced their pursuers.

After her arrival at Carlat, which is said to have resembled a den of thieves under the rule of the brothers Lignerac, Marguerite was again treated as a Sovereign, as she owned likewise the adjacent Viscounty of Murat. She was, however, at first but a sorry Queen, being without a state bed, money, or even a change of linen. Her miserable condition did not, however, last long, as the good people of Agen, thankful at having got rid of their mistress and her Minister, Madame de Duras, sent on, six weeks later, her *lit de parade*, her servants, and property of all description. For this good service she had doubtless to thank the Maréchal de Matignon, who had occupied Agen with Royal troops as soon as she had evacuated the place.

Carlat was an immense feudal fortress, which in bygone days had served as the residence of the Comtes d'Armagnac, and the Ducs de Berry and Bourbon. The place was very strongly fortified, and it contained a Governor's palace, named Bridoré, in which the Queen established her abode, which was to last for nearly two years.

Immediately after her arrival Marguerite was compelled to go to bed for a month, owing to the injury to her lower extremities which had been caused by her hurried ride. The condition of her temper will be better

understood from the fact that she caused her unfortunate apothecary to be flogged with stirrup-leathers, because, she said, he did not bathe her wounds carefully enough.

She now renewed her intrigues with the Duc de Guise, by whom the King of Spain was speedily solicited for help in money for the Lady of Carlat, in order to enable her to reconquer Agen. Philip II. promised assistance freely, but gave none, and in the meantime Marguerite was reduced to considerable straits. She was all the more embarrassed owing to the fact of her being compelled, in the absence of her Treasurer-General, left behind at Agen, to employ a secretary named Choisinin.

This scamp, who was a clever rascal, pilfered everything that he laid his hands on, and, in addition, insolently demanded six thousand crowns for his services, when he was relieved of them. Not receiving this sum at once, he had the insolence to assault one of the Queen's valets, for which offence he was banished for a week. During this week Choisinin composed a pasquinade, which was described as "the dirtiest and most insulting thing ever seen," and he sent it to Marguerite upon the ironical pretence that she was "fond of learned and erudite works."

Being well caned by some of the Queen's indignant gentlemen, this scoundrel threatened to go off to the King of France with his sister's secret correspondence with the Duc de Guise, of which he had retained copies. Choisinin kept his word, and did everything in his power to ruin the Queen of Navarre, with the result that Henri III. cast about in his mind for the means of putting his sister to death.

While she remained at Carlat she was safe, and although offered by Catherine de Médicis an asylum at

her castle of Ibois, she declined the offer with thanks, saying that she was "in a strong place of her own, assisted by many persons of honour, and living there honoured and in all safety." She continued : "And as for that it has pleased you, Madame, to command M. de Suraine to inform me that it was not my place to wage war, it was indeed incumbent upon me, Madame, to protect myself. And I have undertaken nothing else than to endeavour to avoid falling again into the hands of those who would deprive me of life and honour. I beg you to believe, Madame, that I will spare nothing to prevent this, but also that I will remain all my life without worrying you by my presence."

Carlat was not, however, to remain for ever a place of surety, and although the Queen of Navarre was indeed honoured by all the neighbouring nobles for a time, many of these withdrew themselves to join the party of the King. Likewise, the ill-restrained passions of this Princess, now aged thirty-three, were, as on previous occasions, the cause of trouble to her. This trouble resulted in crime, in fact in two deeds of murder.

Not content with François de Lignerac, Marguerite had allowed herself to be made love to by his brother, Marcé, the Governor of Carlat. She had also contracted an amour with a simple gentleman named Aubiac, of whom she had made her equerry.

Suddenly, presumably because Marcé was found in the way of her pleasures, the brother of Lignerac died of poison. Possibly Lignerac suspected the son of the apothecary ; anyway, entering the Queen's chamber unexpectedly, he found him standing quite close to Marguerite's bedside. Seized with an access of jealous rage, Lignerac, without a word, drove his poignard into the



QUEEN CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS
Widow of Henri II. of France

heart of the young man, whose life-blood spurted all over the Queen of Navarre where she lay.

In order to escape from Carlat, where she felt herself nothing better than the prisoner of Lignerac, who indeed had taken her jewels from her in lieu of money he claimed, Marguerite had recourse to the equerry Aubiac, with whom she planned her evasion in order to render herself to her mother's château of Ibois.

This unfortunate young man Aubiac, who was to die for his love, deserves a few words.

The second son of Antoine de Lart et Galart, Seigneur d'Aubiac, he was a simple captain when, upon first perceiving Marguerite at Agen, he exclaimed aloud, "Ah! the adorable creature! could I but obtain her favours I would willingly be hanged for her sake." He was to be gratified in every respect, for, the young captain's speech being reported to the Queen of Navarre, her vanity was aroused. She sent for Aubiac, made him her equerry, and further gave him her heart. Now, for the second time, she became a mother. The son of Aubiac came into the world at Carlat, but the babe being transported in great cold to the village of Escoubiac, this child became both deaf and dumb.

After the death of Marcé, quarrels arose between Lignerac and Aubiac, on the subject of the military command of Carlat. While the *Divorce Satyrique* spitefully describes the Queen's last lover as being red-haired and ugly, Cavrina, the Ambassador of Tuscany, gives quite a different report of his appearance. He says that Aubiac was "young, noble, and handsome, while, however, being audacious and indiscreet."

While Lignerac refused the orders of Henry III. to deliver up Carlat and his Royal mistress, neither would

this violent man accept the position of being the inferior of Aubiac, whom he threatened with "the strange, annoying, and evil conduct" of throwing him over the ramparts.

Eventually, the quarrels between the two lovers increasing, Marguerite fled by night from Carlat, accompanied only by Aubiac and one woman. At least so says one report, which also makes her travel in an ox-waggon to a neighbouring gentleman's castle. In whatever manner she escaped, and other reports say she left openly, attended by all her people, including Lignerac's youngest brother, she travelled rapidly from her town of Murat, and then from château to château, until, in the middle of October, after being nearly drowned in a ford, she reached Catherine's Château d'Ibois.

Here she arrived completely worn out. The sole provisions in the castle of Ibois consisted of nuts, bacon, and beans. Her arrival was expected, but she did not find the friends whose assistance she had counted upon. On the other hand, two nobles, obeying the instructions of Henry III., warned the Marquis de Canillac of her approach, and this Canillac was already, at the head of a troop of cavalry, beating the country for the Queen of Navarre, and especially for young Aubiac.

Upon his speedy arrival at Ibois Marguerite attacked Canillac with all the sarcasm of which she was capable, and that she was eloquent we well know. After swallowing her insults, the Marquis, already captivated, humbly excused himself for constituting himself her gaoler, by saying that he was acting by the King's orders.

"The brother and sister will make up their quarrels," replied Marguerite, "while as for thee, thou wilt find thyself left!"

She had, however, disguised Aubiac by shaving him and personally cutting off all his hair, and she had hidden him as well. The unfortunate equerry was, however, discovered and dragged off by Canillac to the house of a neighbouring Seigneur, while news of his arrest was sent to the King. To him, and to Catherine, Choisinin had taken the stolen letters before this, which may well account for the change of the mother's dispositions towards the daughter upon her arrival at Ibois.

The King was so furious upon reading the papers from Marguerite to Guise, that he wrote to the Duc de Villeroi, telling him to order Canillac to conduct his sister a prisoner to the castle of Usson, in Auvergne. "From this hour," Henri III. continued, "let her be deprived of her estates and pensions; they will help to reimburse the Marquis for his expenses in keeping her. As for her women, let him hunt them out, sharp, and give her some decent woman as *femme de chambre*. Above all, let him keep good guard over her. The Queen, my mother, enjoins me to cause that Aubiac to be hanged. See that it is done, and doubly done, in the presence of that miserable woman, in the courtyard of the Château d'Usson. Have all her rings sent to me, and an inventory made of them, too, without delay." In a further letter the King says that it will be as well to give Aubiac some form of trial before hanging him. The charge against him is not known, but some say that it was not only that of being Marguerite's lover but of having caused the death of Gilbert de Marcé by poison.

Although an old soldier, whom the wars had left with only one eye, Canillac was himself enamoured with the charms of Marguerite. He had, accordingly, not waited

for the King's detailed instructions to hang the lover in possession of those charms which he desired himself.

At a place called Aigueperse, a gallows was erected and a ditch dug at its foot, and to this gallows Aubiac was conducted. Before his death, which he met most bravely, Aubiac kissed a blue velvet sleeve, which was the last gift of his mistress, for whose sake he seemed content to die. This brave young man was still breathing when the lieutenant of the Grand Provost-Marshal caused his body to be bundled into his grave. This, we suppose, was by way of conforming to the King's order to have the hanging "doubly done"!

The castle of Usson, to which the Queen of Navarre was conducted by Canillac, was an excessively strong fortress on the peak of a rocky hill overlooking the town of the same name, which also formed a part of the appanage of this unfortunate Princess. It was supposed to be inaccessible, and had formerly been used by Louis XI. for the incarceration of those of his prisoners whom he wished to retain more surely even than in the terrible dungeons of the Château de Loches.

In the fourteenth century this strong citadel had belonged to the English, who could never be ejected. It was only as the result of being bought out that they eventually consented to leave it. At the time that the Queen of Navarre took up her residence at Usson in 1587 there were no less than four lines of bastioned fortifications around the high central keep, which formed the dwelling-place of the château.

Marguerite was in despair, and wrote complaining bitterly to her mother's Maître d'hôtel, Sarlan, of the bad treatment she had received when she had accepted Catherine's hospitality at Ibois. She, however, ended her

letter by saying that she had faith in the Queen-Mother, and that her death would not be compassed unless it were by her will.

Marguerite, however, was possessed of an extremely buoyant disposition ; no misfortunes weighed heavily upon her for long. According to her usual custom, she accordingly soon set herself to work to make the best of a bad situation. Observing that her gaoler Canillac commenced to flash amorous glances upon her from his remaining eye, she beamed upon him in return with her own translucent orbs. "Poor man!" exclaims Brantôme, "what did he think he could do? Be able to hold prisoner she who with her eyes and beautiful face can reduce to subjection to her bonds and chains all the rest of the world like a convict?"

Soon of her gaoler Marguerite had made her prisoner. Although he was well paid by the King to keep her secure, the fair captive had soon become her own mistress. Canillac only wished to restore her to liberty, and at the same time sold himself secretly to Guise and the League.

There was, however, a Marquise to be circumvented as well as a Marquis. By flattery this was soon effected. Marguerite gave her some of her valuable rings—which had not been sent to the King according to his orders. She dressed the Marquise up also in her own gorgeous dresses, while remarking cajolingly: "Now you are really beautiful. How they become you! It is evident that you were made for the Court; your place is there."

Very soon the Marquise de Canillac was in the toils as deeply as her husband, and now all sorts of negotiations were conducted through them with the Duc de Guise. To him Canillac also wrote, giving him the information

that the Queen-Mother and the King had formed a combination for getting rid of Marguerite, and, after her death, giving a new wife to Henri de Navarre, in the person of their niece, the daughter of the Duc de Lorraine. Canillac at the same time informed Guise that he hoped soon to have a good troop at his disposal with which he might prove of use in the Duc's service.

There seems but little doubt that Marguerite's death was indeed being considered at the Court in the year 1588, and that, moreover, the King of Navarre, to whom Henri III. was sending large subsidies secretly to resist the Leaguers, knew all about this plot.

In 1587 we, however, find Henri III. sending the Duc de Mayenne openly to attack the Béarnais. While he was thus still openly at war with the King, we find Henri de Navarre writing to his mistress, Corisande: "I only wait for the happiness of hearing that they have strangled the late Queen of Navarre; that, with the death of her mother, would indeed make me sing the canticle of Simeon." Marguerite was not, however, born to be hanged; she lived in comfort in Usson for no less than seventeen years, and eventually, after granting her husband a divorce, existed on the most friendly terms with him and his second wife, Marie de Médicis, in Paris. In the meantime, let us see how this cunning woman took advantage of the enamoured Canillac, and secured her freedom without his aid.

While the double-dealing Marquis, after fighting in her interests against those of the King, his master, was absent in order to arrange with Guise to interest Philip II., the Pope, and the Duke of Savoy on her behalf, Marguerite made a secret move. She had no mind to die, and was by no means certain that, should the affairs of

the League go wrong, Canillac might not reveal everything to the King. Accordingly she wrote directly to her old lover at Orléans, and begged him to send her a body of troops. Instantly these were sent by Guise, and Marguerite, having won over the garrison of Usson, they were admitted to the citadel without opposition. Shortly after, Canillac, returning, presented himself at the gates, whereupon Marguerite sent him out the polite message of "not at home." He was forced to remain outside. The best of the joke for Marguerite was, however, yet to come. "No sooner had the disconcerted Marquis turned his back than Marguerite stripped the Marquise of all her jewels and finery, and sent her off, meanly attired, with all her guards, and made herself mistress of the place."

The above is quoted from the *Divorce Satyrique*, but shortly after this the same authority shows us Marguerite as making large donations to the outwitted Canillac.

The deed of gift to Jean de Beaufort, Marquis de Canillac, of various remunerative rights over several seigneuries in Auvergne, commences in royally magniloquent style: "We Marguerite, by the grace of God, Queen of Navarre, only sister of the King, Duchesse de Valois et d'Étampes, Comtesse d'Agenais, Rouergue, Senlis et Marle, Dame de la Fère and of the judgeships of Rieux, Rivière, Verdun et Albigeois, etc."

This Royal document, clearly the act of one who arrogated to herself the rank and state of a ruling Sovereign, was "given under our hand at Usson, September 8th, 1588." A reigning Sovereign Marguerite had indeed become once more, the only difference being that, instead of being Queen of Agen, she now was Queen of Usson. Moreover, while wars and quarrels surged all

over the Kingdom around her, Queen Marguerite was left alone in her glory at Usson, where neither her brother, while he lived, nor her husband, after the King's death, ventured to attack her in her impregnable fortress. There she resided and ruled year after year, almost forgotten by the world, the only events of importance at this little Court being the occasional change of the lovers of its Queen.

Her amours were, alas! that it should have to recorded, many indeed, and her lovers selected from all ranks, even from those of the cooks and choir-boys, to be promoted to positions of trust about her person. The worthy Canon Matthieu says that "she was indeed a Cytherean for her amours," while, as Mongez remarks: "If one should listen to the *Divorce Satyrique*, the detail of the debauches of which the fort of Usson was the theatre would indeed be infinite."

That Marguerite, however, contrived to keep on good terms with the Church during the many years of her rule of Usson is evident from the panegyric of the Père Hilarion de Coste, in his *Éloges des Dames Illustres*. According to this worthy priest, "her dwelling was a Thabor for devotion, a Lebanon for retreat, an Olympia for exercises, a Caucasus for affliction." Another priest compares the rock of Usson to Noah's ark, but he unfortunately forgets to add that, if the animals were mated, the males were all compelled to pair with the same female. A good jest was made by M. de Lalanne. In an eulogistic address to his Queen by a functionary of Usson, he remarked that "the rock was the wonder and marvel of Auvergne, where it appears that Paradise on earth cannot be elsewhere." À propos of this, Lalanne very pithily suggests that the Paradise of Marguerite

must have been uncommonly like that of the prophet Mahomed.

Paradise or no, upon the peak of Usson Marguerite was content to dwell. She had tried the outside world and found that liberty was nowhere, but all commotion and turmoil. At Usson she enjoyed repose, religion, and, above all, the delights of love.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Love-letters to Corisande

1580—1589

NOTHING is more calculated to show the many-sided nature of Henri de Navarre than a perusal of his letters to La belle Corisande, of which a large number are in existence. Henri was a born letter-writer. Many doubts have been cast upon his poetical and musical capabilities, but those who are inclined to deny that he was the author of the song "Charmante Gabrielle" might well change their opinion after reading some of his letters. These contain a freshness, an appreciation of nature, a trustful repose in Providence, and often display a poetical spirit. At the same time, they are written with a *verve*, a go, a jovial good nature which makes one see the man himself, sympathise with him, feel with him, be carried away by his innate courage, which no ill luck could crush, even as was the Comtesse de Gramont herself convinced by them, and carried away during many years of their liaison.

It must be remembered that, in writing to his belle Corisande, Henri felt that it was necessary to conceal nothing of his aims or aspirations ; he loved her, appreciated her powers of discrimination, and, moreover, whatever she might feel about him, was absolutely de-

void of any jealous suspicions where she was concerned. How different, indeed, was the absolute security and faith placed by "le Béarnais" in Diane d'Andouins in this respect from any feelings he subsequently experienced towards the easy, good-natured Gabrielle d'Estrées, or that petulant little spitfire, Henriette d'Entragues.

With this feeling of security in his mind, when writing to Corisande Henri let himself go as if addressing his second self, and thus unconsciously revealed much that was noble, much that was great in a nature which would otherwise have appeared to consist merely of a bantering frivolity covering, as a cloak, an innate licentiousness. The letters thus convey to us the fact that, although naturally sensual, from his strongly developed virile nature, which also prompted him to noble deeds, Henri de Navarre did not possess a really licentious mind. He worshipped woman, it is true. He could not help it; the attraction of sex, of beauty, was so strongly developed in him that the charm of the petticoat drew him as a spell. But, at the same time, he was willing to see the better side of womanhood; while acknowledging its frailties, to forgive them, and realise the beauties which they could not destroy in the feminine soul; thus he did not revel in licentiousness, but simply obeyed the call of nature.

Nor was this loving nature of the Béarnais confined to womanhood alone—no, this same affectionate disposition was but an example of that essence of humanity which formed one of the principal attributes of this complex character. It was but another string of the same harp which sounded the first pæan of kindness to inferiors, the song of mercy to the poor peasant, who until his time was merely looked upon as the fit subject of vile oppression.

To return to the letters, which, fortunately for us, reveal so much of the better nature of this man Henri de Navarre, this man who has rightly come down to posterity as "Henri le Grand." How prettily he writes! "I arrived last evening at Marans, whither I had gone to arrange about its defence. Ah! how I longed for you. It is the place the most suited to your disposition that I have ever seen. It is an isle surrounded by umbrageous marshes, where every few hundred paces one finds canals by which to bring in wood in boats. The water clear, running slowly, the canals of every width. Among these deserts are a thousand gardens, to which one can only go in a bark. The island is two miles in circumference, and past the foot of the castle flows a river through the centre of the little town. Hardly a house but its doorway is entered by its little boat."

Further on, the writer describes the country around, with its scenes of nature and of cultivation, its birds, its fish, its wheat; for nothing escapes the eye of this accurate observer. "There are endless wind-mills and isolated farms, all kinds of birds that sing; all sorts of sea-birds also. I am sending you some of their feathers. Of fish the quantity is immense." Here comes in the practical nature of the man who so often found it hard to obtain a meal; for he continues: "The size and the price! A large carp only three sols, and five for a pike; it is a place of great traffic, and all by water. One can reside there happily in peace and safely in time of war. One can delight oneself there with the object of one's love and sigh for its absence. Ah! how good it is to sing there!"

This last spontaneous exclamation reveals the joyous

disposition of the writer, still a young man full of vigour. How naturally he displays all of his thoughts and feelings to this dear friend of his heart, from whom nothing that he feels need be concealed! In another letter he shows his mistress how well he realises the dangers by which he is hourly surrounded. Already upon two occasions attempts had been made to assassinate him, and now he has learned the death of his cousin, Henri de Condé, poisoned by his second wife, Charlotte de la Trémouille, and her lover. Henri de Navarre feels himself left alone. "I am now the only target aimed at by the perfidies of the Mass. They have poisoned him, the traitors! If it should happen that God should remain the master, then will I, by His grace, become the executioner. I see infinite difficulties ahead in my road. Pray God boldly for me. Should I escape, it can only be He who can have guarded me. Until the tomb, to which I am perchance far nearer than I am aware, I shall remain your faithful slave. My soul! I am well enough in body, but greatly afflicted in mind. Love me, and make it evident to me; it will be my great consolation."

Upon another occasion, after the utter discomfiture of the Germans on the Loire by Henri III. and Henri de Guise, we find him torn by the conflicting counsels of those around him. "Ah!" he cries, "the violent proofs by which they sound my brain. I can hardly help soon becoming either a fool or else a clever man." It was as a clever man that Henri came out in the end, and apparently he realised it himself, since we find him writing that he finds his own head the best at his council-table, and that he makes scarcely any mistakes in his decisions.

His faith in the protection of God is profound. He writes to Corisande: "Should they unearth 'a killer'

for me, should they put people on my track to slay me, my principal assurance is in God, who will keep me by His grace."

It is from Henri's pen again that the Comtesse de Gramont learns all the details of the death of Henri de Condé, and in reading his account it is impossible to help wondering how a man with a deadly dose of poison seething within him had the courage or resolution to tilt at the ring or to play a game of chess! They were, however, a tough race, those early Bourbons, as witnessed by the especial toughness of, the rebel of the family, the great Constable, Charles, Duc de Bourbon, who died while mounting a scaling-ladder when storming the walls of Rome, during the childhood of the mother of Henri de Navarre. The letter to his mistress from this Prince describing the death-scene of Condé is dated March 10th, 1588. In it he says:

"This poor Prince, having tilted at the ring on Thursday, supped, feeling all right. At midnight he was seized by vomiting, which lasted till dawn; all Friday he stayed in bed. He got up on Saturday, dined up, then played a game of chess. He rose from his chair, walked about the room, and chatted with one and another. Suddenly he exclaimed: 'Give me my chair! I feel a dreadful weakness.' No sooner had he seated himself than he lost the power of speech, and directly afterwards gave up his soul. The marks of poison came out at once."

While reading this description of his cousin's death from the pen of the Béarnais it is impossible to avoid wondering how the guilty wife felt who was the author of her husband's tortures, while sitting, watching and waiting for him to die!

Strange, indeed, was it that Henri IV. should subsequently have rehabilitated this wicked woman, have, moreover, recognised her son, who was known to have been the result of her adultery.

Henri was, however, a mass of contradictions, and in this instance, once more, we can but see a striking proof of his humanity, which always prompted him rather to pardon than to punish.

One pretty little letter, which he indited to his sweetheart, reveals him to us quite in the style of the Knight-errant. He is going to fight, and asks her for a favour, while saying that he will fire a shot or so in her honour. We wonder if, when actually delivering his death-dealing blows with sword or pistol, this *preux chevalier* paused to dwell upon the lady of his thoughts, while cutting short the career of some unfortunate opponent, who perchance loved not less ardently, but more faithfully than himself.

"Make up your mind," he begs, "my beautiful mistress, to make me a favour, for one of yours alone will I wear during this war. I have only two hundred horsemen against their three hundred, but I will see if they care to fight; if they do, I will let fly a pistol-shot in your honour."

Later he learns that the beautiful Isle of Marans, whence he had sent the sea-gull's plumes, has fallen into the enemy's hands.

"The enemies had taken the Isle of Marans before my arrival, so that I was unable to help the château, the troops that I was bringing there from Gascony not having arrived. Please God, you will soon hear of me that I have retaken it."

It is an expression often found in his letters to Corisande, this "you will soon hear of me"! It may

have seemed vainglorious, but it must be excused in the case of this bold leader of men, of whose gallant deeds his attached lover indeed often learned before she received the letters announcing that he proposed to undertake them. Despite the pride with which her bosom thrilled, we can understand the cruel anxieties to which this loving woman's heart must have been constantly exposed. At times it was not from the death-dealing blow of the enemy but from fell disease that she ran the risk of losing this most Royal lover and brave soldier. Such, for instance, was the case when she received his letter written in January 1589, although by that time the unhappy Corisande had ceased entirely to believe in his fidelity. Describing his malady, Henri de Navarre writes from his bed : "I can scarcely write. Certes ! my heart, I have seen the skies open, but I have not been a good enough man to enter there. God still has work for me to do. In twice twenty-four hours I was reduced to being wrapped up in the shroud. You would have felt sorry for me. Had but my crisis lasted two hours more, the worms would have had a fine time with me. I stop, for I feel too ill to go on. *Bon jour*, my soul."

Throughout the constant warfare in which he is engaged we find Corisande uppermost in her lover's thoughts. He is always sending her some present. He sees something which he thinks will please her, and it is sent. Some of these gifts are unusual. Such, for instance, are two young wild boars which he has tamed, or two fawns which will follow him anywhere—"even to the Mass !" He notices among his horses one which he thinks would make a good match with one belonging to the Comtesse de Gramont, and it is sent to her forthwith.

One of his most cheery, soldierly letters carries the reader with it. We see him in front of the fight, we wish that we could have had the good fortune to stand by the side of Henri de Navarre in that merry, rattling contest, "the most furious skirmish that I have seen." He describes it on March 1st, 1588, with all the light-heartedness of the Gascon which he is.

"Yesterday, the Maréchal and the Grand-Prior, knowing that I had dismissed all my troops, came to look us up and offer battle. It was at the top of the vines, on the side of Agen. There were five hundred horsemen of them and nearly three thousand foot. After they had taken five hours to restore their order, which was pretty confused, they started, determined to fling us into the ditches of the town, which they really ought to have done, as the whole of their infantry came into the fight. We received them at the wall of my vineyard, which is the most advanced, and we retired at a foot's-pace, always skirmishing, until five hundred paces from the town, where was our main body, which might be of about three hundred arquebus-men. Thence we took them right back to the very spot where they had attacked us. It was the most furious skirmish which I have ever seen."

There is plenty of elegant love-making in these letters; expressions such as "I kiss thy hands, my heart, a million times," or "Your slave adores you violently," are frequently to be met with. Henri tells his *chère amie* also little things about his wife, of whom he speaks scornfully, especially upon one occasion when Marguerite is evidently contemplating going into the wine-business. "A man has come to me from the lady of the camels, to demand from me a passport to let pass five hundred tuns

of wine, without paying duty—'for her mouth,' for this is inscribed on a patent. That is to declare herself a female drunkard on parchment!

"For fear lest she should fall from so great a height as the back of her beast, I have refused her. This is to become a water-spout to excess. The Queen of Tarvasset could never do so much."

This letter was written at the end of 1585, a couple of months after Marguerite's arrival at Carlat, and by calling his wife "the lady of the camels" the Béarnais is evidently making a sneering allusion to the grotesque circumstances attending her hegira from Agen. We have already mentioned one occasion upon which Henri expresses the wish to hear that his wife had been strangled; he makes another reference to the possibility of the death of Marguerite. This is after, at the King's request, this Huguenot leader goes at the beginning of 1589 with his forces to assist Henri III. against the League. He then informs Corisande: "The King has spoken to me on the subject of the lady of Auvergne. I think that he is going to make her take a bad jump." This proposed jump for his sister was presumably to be from the gallows, but the fanatic young monk Jacques Clément had jumped Henri III. himself out of the world before three months had elapsed from the date of this letter.

In this same year of 1589, which in the autumn saw Henri de Navarre's accession to the throne of France, Corisande, already jealous for some time past, commences to sulk, and also upbraid her lover both when present and absent. The King of Navarre writes stiffly in return—he asks if she thinks it wise to show such coldness, to use her own judgment about the matter. Henri, how-

ever, who is most certainly indulging in other amours elsewhere, does not scruple still to vow that "his fidelity is astonishingly white and unspotted." When he adds, "there never was anything like it"! we can well imagine his mistress snorting with disdain, judging by her own remarks written upon these later letters. Notwithstanding that her lover ends them in the following style: "I have ever remained fixed in the love and service that I owe to you. God is my witness of this!" Corisande remains unconvinced. She makes ironical comments upon the correspondence of 1589, and even alters the wording in her own handwriting. When, for instance, the Béarnais writes, "I will preserve to you fidelity," this disillusioned woman alters the last word to "*in*fidelity," while adding, "I believe it."

When matters had gone as far as this it was, alas! a case of good-bye to love, although, from the effect of custom, we still find Henri writing extravagantly, "Adieu, my heart; I kiss thee a hundred million times."

CHAPTER XXIX

Henri at Arques and Ivry

1589

THE years 1588 and 1589 were fateful ones for the three Henris. In May of the former Henri de Guise insolently entered Paris against his Sovereign's direct order, the famous Barricades were thrown up in the streets, the Swiss Guards fired upon by the people, Guise was made the idol of the mob, and Henri III. escaped from the Louvre in headlong flight to the Château de Blois. In December the Duc de Guise insolently bearded the King once more, this time at Blois, when Henri III., who had already vowed that he would kill his enemy, now carried out his threat. The Duc de Guise was assassinated by a group of the King's *mignons* at the very door of the King's chamber in the early morning of December 23rd. As we have described this assassination at length elsewhere (*Sidelights on the Court of France*), we need not give details of the tragedy here.

Henri III. came out from his cabinet, kicked the still writhing body of his enemy with glee, and a day or two later caused Louis, Cardinal de Guise, the Duc's brother, to be murdered also. The King now delightedly informed his mother that, the " King of Paris " being dead,

he was once more King of France. A week later died Catherine de Médicis, at Blois, where she succumbed to the shock of, while very ill, being wrongfully accused by the Cardinal de Bourbon of being the author of the double murder of the Guises. When this wicked but able old woman died, on January 5th, 1589, she was seventy years of age.

Henri III. was now free from the domination of two powerful personages, but he possessed two violent enemies in the shape of Guise's sister, the handsome young Duchesse de Montpensier, a widow, and his brother, the Duc de Mayenne. These two now headed the League, in his fear of which the King appealed to his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, for assistance, although he was still at war with him.

Although the Béarnais was advised not to trust the King, he did so. After sending some of his troops under Châtillon, the son of the murdered Coligny, to help Henri III. against the Leaguers, he fearlessly went and threw himself at the feet of his liege lord at Plessis-les-Tours in May 1589. The two Kings cordially embraced one another, and in the following month the Huguenot forces, joined to the Royal troops in amicable union, took various cities from the Leaguers, and then marched on Paris, which they besieged and prepared to assault. Henri III. had established his headquarters at Saint-Cloud, Henri de Navarre his at Meudon, and there seemed every probability of the capital, which was all for the Guise faction, falling into their hands in a few days' time.

The Duchesse de Montpensier, however, utterly upset their plans, by instigating a young monk, Jacques Clément by name, to assassinate the King. Upon

August 1st, 1589, Clément succeeded in driving a long knife into the belly of Henri III., when Henri, withdrawing it from the wound, struck the assassin with it in the face. The monk was instantly killed by a courtier, but the King did not die at once, and behaved with more fortitude and decision during his last hours than ever before in his life. He sent for Henri de Navarre, recognised his brother-in-law as his successor, and made all his courtiers swear allegiance to him.

Upon the following morning Henri III. died, when the King of Navarre having become, almost nominally, Henri IV. of France, found himself in a most precarious position. For not only was he at war with the League, aided by Spanish troops, but the greater number of the courtiers and other followers of the late King, vowing that they would not serve a Huguenot, refused their allegiance to Henri de Navarre. Henri was thus left with but a small army of his own, and without money wherewith to pay the Swiss allies who had previously joined him and the late King.

The cunning ability of the Béarnais, however, rose equal to the crisis. Although he was obliged to withdraw from the siege of Paris, he declared that he was willing to allow himself to be instructed in the tenets of the Catholic religion ; he promised that no changes should be made in the posts of the nobles about the Court, and notably, by unlimited promises, he contrived to gain over the greedy but able General, the Maréchal de Biron, to his side.

While, owing to Biron's adhesion, many other Catholic nobles signed a pact of allegiance to Henri on August 4th, a large number of the Huguenots,

disgusted at the idea of his receiving Catholic instruction, left the banner of their old leader and went off to their homes.

Depositing the body of his brother-in-law in an abbey at Compiègne, Henri now marched off to the coast of Normandy, to endeavour to obtain both troops and money from Queen Elizabeth. Fortunately for him, the Governors of both Dieppe and Caen declared themselves in his favour, but soon, while with his back to the sea, he found himself confronted by the Duc de Mayenne with thirty thousand Leaguers, a number of Spaniards, and a force of Germans.

Henri now showed himself great, both as a man and a soldier. Although pressed to retire across the sea to England, he absolutely refused to do anything of the kind, but carefully disposed his small army in an excellent position at Arques, four miles from Dieppe, and there waited for his foes, who were confidently expected to bring him back a prisoner to Paris.

While the over-confident Parisians were actually hiring windows from which to view the ignominious entry of Henri in the train of the conqueror Mayenne, the said Henri was administering, at Arques, a most thorough thrashing to the allied army of the League, which doubled his own in number.

During this battle of Arques the danger of Henri de Navarre was heightened owing to the treachery of the German foot-soldiers of Mayenne, who, at a time when they were getting the worst of it, declared that they were Protestants, and cried out that they wished to join the King's side. These Germans were therefore assisted over the parapets of the earth-works into the lines of the Huguenots; but when they had been inside a short

time, seeing the success of a movement made by the Duc de Mayenne, they traitorously attacked those who had spared them. Henri was one of those who was thrown to the ground by a German spearman, but he was rescued when the treacherous wretch had his spear at his throat.

The victory of Arques, September 23rd, 1589, was all the more complete owing to the great ability of Biron and the excessive valour of Henri de Navarre, whose white plumes were frequently seen waving in the midst of the foes, upon whom he made repeated furious charges. While the crestfallen Mayenne retired, to await for further Spanish help to arrive from the Duke of Parma in the Netherlands, Queen Elizabeth sent over six thousand English troops to join the Béarnais. Two other detachments of his own troops, from whom he had separated upon raising the siege of Paris, also arrived to his assistance. Henri, with twenty thousand men, now far from being led a captive into Paris, made a rapid march, and attacked and carried all the faubourgs of that city on the left bank of the Seine. About a thousand of the Parisians were slaughtered by the Huguenots, out of revengeful recollection of the great Saint Bartholomew massacre, and the King slept upon a bed of straw in a house which belonged to one of the courtiers of Henri III. On the following day, being unable to storm the walls or to force the gates of the city, Henri IV. withdrew his army, while endeavouring to force Mayenne, who was approaching, to a conflict, but in vain.

In March of the following year the Béarnais was more successful; and on the night of the 13th of that month he determined, as Du Plessis-Mornay told him after the battle was won, "to commit the bravest folly

that ever was, in staking the fate of the Kingdom on one cast of the dice."

He had but a small army with him that night—only ten thousand two hundred men, all told, encamped on the plain near Ivry, or in the adjacent villages on the banks of the river Eure, which is in the north of France, near Dreux and Mantes. However, the men were well sheltered from the cold, well fed, and supplied with wine likewise. Many of these men were German and Swiss mercenaries, and the latter Du Plessis-Mornay had contrived to pay, an unusual event, which put them in good heart for the coming battle.

Upon the following morning Henri de Navarre found himself once more opposed by Mayenne, with a powerful army of allies : French, Flemish, Spaniards, and Walloons, these latter being under the gallant Comte d'Egmont, of the brave old fighting stock of the Ducs de Gueldre. In cavalry alone the Leaguers were to the King's forces as three to one.

Henri had, however, a high heart, and, with more than his usual courage, he had surmounted both his own helmet and his horse's head with plumes of immense size. These, of white peacock feathers, must, he knew, surely make him the object of every one of the enemy's lances, swords, or arquebuses, so ridiculously conspicuous they were.

The King, however, intended them to be merely the beacon to lead his men on to victory. "Comrades," he exclaimed, addressing them, "God is on our side ! There are His enemies—here is your King. Should the standards fall, rally to my white plume—it will lead you to victory and honour."

Having addressed his troops in this spirited manner,

Henri proceeded to win his greatest victory. All know what happened at Ivry, from Macaulay's lines:

> And in they burst, and on they rushed,
> While, like a guiding star,
> Amid the thickest carnage blazed
> The helmet of Navarre.

The whole of Mayenne's Swiss mercenaries eventually saved their lives by surrendering when they found the King's artillery just about to play upon their ranks. These men fought merely for pay, and one side was the same to them as another to fight bravely for when paid. To pay them was, however, a little formality which had been neglected by Mayenne, accordingly the Swiss surrendered *en bloc* in his moment of greatest need.

The Germans would have liked to have saved their lives in a similar manner, but the King's troops at Ivry remembered their treachery at Arques. Henri himself, usually so humane, likewise gave orders to spare the flying Frenchmen but to kill the Germans. Killed the poor wretches were, accordingly, most mercilessly, without quarter. Killed also was the brave Comte d'Egmont, while his surviving Walloons made off as fast as they could run. The Duc de Mayenne and the Duc de Nemours, both forgetting that they were Princes with Royal blood in their veins, turned their horses' heads and fled for their lives from the field. Many of the flying French infantry were drowned in the river Eure, which was in flood. This river did not, however, stay the pursuit of Henri de Navarre, who crossed the swollen stream even although Mayenne had caused the only bridge to be broken down. Although his arm was all swollen and bruised with blows given and received,

although his helmet and his horse's head had been shorn of some of their immense white plumes, Henri was foremost in the pursuit as in the fight. He hunted Mayenne into Mantes, after killing five thousand of his men ; but although Henri had captured both the black lilies of Mayenne and the banner bearing the red cornet of the House of Egmont, he did not, this time, ride off with them to Corisande.

The days for bearing the trophies of his victories to the Comtesse de Gramont had, alas ! gone by for ever—no longer now did the gallant soldier write, as formerly : "If the enemy does not press us after this meeting, I will try to steal a month. I am well, having nothing in the heart but a violent desire to see you."

Those old days were, indeed, gone for ever ; for some time past the faithless warrior had been paying ardent court to a lady known as La dame de Roche-Guyon, one who would never consent to become his mistress, although he duly presented her with one of those written promises of marriage of which he was ever so lavish. It was to her feet that he now carried any odd flags that he might have to spare for decorative purposes ; but, finding that she still persisted in remaining virtuous, Henri de Navarre ceased to trouble himself about this lady as soon as he had once seen, and become enamoured of, a new flame—one well-known to the world as "Charmante Gabrielle."

Before, however, we proceed to relate the story of Henri de Navarre and Gabrielle d'Estrées we must refer to the manner in which the justly offended Comtesse de Gramont endeavoured to pay out her faithless lover for his neglect, by thwarting his ambitions where his charming sister Catherine de Bourbon was concerned. It must be

owned that the Béarnais well merited that the designs of the woman who had loved him faithfully for ten years, and who had borne him one child, if not two children, should have succeeded. She was ever a good friend to him, as we have shown, and all our sympathies go out in consequence to La belle Corisande.

But when, for him, age had indeed withered and custom staled her infinite variety, how do we find the King of Navarre, now become King of France, behaving to the woman whose self-sacrifice had so greatly helped to sustain him in his darker hours? He simply attempts to make use of her still unchanged love as a tool to forward his political schemes. If Henri was great, he also was certainly very small!

CHAPTER XXX

How Henri treated his Sister

1590 *and Later*

THE real names of the lady who has come down to history as the lovely Châtelaine de la Roche-Guyon, were Antoinette de Pons, Marquise de Guercheville. Her château was in the neighbourhood of Mantes, which town Henri occupied with his forces after the battle of Ivry. The rains were very heavy that March, the roads, such as they were, impassable for troops, the Swiss and the Germans murmuring for pay and disinclined to move. Henri IV., therefore, after having decorated the castle walls of La Roche-Guyon with the captured banners of Ivry, was, perforce, compelled to remain for a time in the neighbourhood. He occupied the time which could not be devoted to military movements in sighing like a furnace at the feet of the obdurate Antoinette, whom we honour for her resistance.

His love-making only being found acceptable up to a certain point, Henri de Navarre had ample time to devote to his correspondence and political combinations. With James VI. of Scotland, afterwards James I. of England, he was on friendly terms. When he discovered that the young son of Mary, Queen of Scots, was willing to cement this friendship by a matrimonial alliance, the

Béarnais showed the greatest hard-heartedness towards his sister, who acted as his Regent in Navarre during his absences.

No longer seeking to associate the devoted Corisande with the inmost feelings of his heart, he now sought solely to employ his mistress for the furtherance of the designs of his policy. He, accordingly, wrote to the Comtesse de Gramont to request her to gradually detach his sister from her love for his cousin, the dashing Comte de Soissons. Henri told Corisande that the King of Scots had offered to come in person, and at his own expense, to serve under him at the head of six thousand men, and added that nothing could prevent him from succeeding Elizabeth on the throne of England. Accordingly, as the result of the ten years' attachment shown to him by Diane d'Andouins, for sole reward he entrusts her with the post of go-between for a new match, while requesting her to play a shabby trick upon the Princess Catherine de Navarre, her intimate friend.

In order to break down the sturdy resistance which he expected on the part of his faithful sister, who had already refused many offers, Henri puts the words that he considers necessary into the mouth of his deserted mistress.

"Prepare my sister, in advance, to look well upon him ; point out to her the position which we are in, and the greatness of this Prince, and his virtue. I will not write to her myself. Only talk to her as if you are discussing the fact that it is time for her to be married, and that there is no other *parti* that she can hope for but this one."

Henri finished up this casuistical letter by sending an even greater number of kisses than usual, but Corisande

was not in the least deceived, for she well knew his love to be as dead as a doornail.

Although, throughout that year of 1590, Henri continued, as of old, to write well-worded accounts of his military operations, Corisande had already learned of the commencement of the reign of Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Being justly irritated, the Comtesse endeavoured to satisfy her vengeance by encouraging Catherine, in the teeth of her brother, to carry out her marriage with Charles de Bourbon.

Nor was the Comte de Soissons behindhand. While the King was engaged in grave military operations, he left the army on the pretext of going to Nogent, instead of which he travelled as swiftly as possible to Béarn. In the presence of Corisande he and the Princess signed their reciprocal vows, after which the marriage would certainly have taken place immediately save for the inflexible resistance of a Protestant pastor, by name of Palma Cayet. The Comte threatened to kill him if he would not tie the knot, whereupon the minister replied that he preferred to die at the hands of a Prince for having done his duty than at those of the hangman for betraying his master. "Thereupon," says Lestoille, "the Seigneur de Pangeas, husband of Henri's former mistress 'la petite Tignonville,' who was at the head of the Sovereign Council of Béarn, having received the King's orders, seized the castle. He compelled the Comte to leave the country, and put guards about the Princess for fear lest she should be carried off."

It is Sully who informs us that, being able to wreak no other vengeance upon Pangeas, the Comte flung him from top to bottom of a staircase, when he found him subsequently in the King's residence at Pontoise.

Sully now was given some dirty work to do by his master, and by a series of lies, of which he himself was ashamed, eventually recovered the written promise of marriage from the Princess Catherine. Upon other occasions we find Sully, of his own accord, and against his master's wishes, seizing promises of marriage given by Henri to Gabrielle or to Henriette d'Entragues ; but upon this occasion the faithful Minister, owning his disgust, says : "I was seized with a fit of trembling when the King gave me such an order."

None the less, he obeyed it, and, by enacting the shameful part of a false friend, of a jolly good fellow working all in her interest, he completely deceived the poor Princess Catherine. He played his part so well that he even deceived the cunning Abbé Perron, one of the smartest and wittiest men of the day, who became a Cardinal. Completely likewise did the Duc de Sully draw the hood over the eyes of Corisande, the sympathetic friend of the Princess.

He contrived, in the end, to get the paper into his possession by saying that, for the Princess to hold it over her brother's head was an insult to the King. Further, that the King would most undoubtedly be touched by the confidence shown by his sister in himself if she should hand it over, and would certainly give his consent to her marriage in consequence with the man whom she loved so dearly.

Having, by this abominable variation of the present-day "confidence trick," defrauded Catherine in one respect, Sully, by a further abuse of confidence, deceived the poor young Princess yet further. Inspired by the belief in his utmost fidelity, Catherine handed over to Sully another paper, one by which the lovers vowed

that, if they were not permitted to marry one another, they would die single.

While the crafty Minister handed the first-named paper to Henri de Navarre, who tore it up gleefully, he kept the second in his own pocket, in case it might be useful at any time, but said nothing about it.

Being thus deprived of her arms of defence, Catherine's resistance was eventually broken down, and some years later, weary of the long struggle, she allowed herself to be dragged, an unwilling bride, to the altar, with Henri, Duc de Bar, the son of the Princess Claude de France, and who became reigning Duc de Lorraine.

Previous to this forced marriage Catherine wrote a long letter to her brother, in which she complained bitterly of the martyrdom which was being inflicted upon her, and asking his permission to end her days in a convent.

Henri, in return, merely wrote to M. de la Force, complaining bitterly of his sister's ingratitude. He says that, in spite of her apparent humility, she causes him to see through her, to learn her evil nature: "For she complains of me the most cruelly possible with apparently soft words, but really quite the contrary, as you will see when I show you the letter. . . . Ingratitudes will be punished by Heaven, and it is thither that I remit her. Whatever she may do or say, I will not cease to be her father, her brother, and her King, and to do my duty. Let her therefore do hers, which every one unfortunately does not do nowadays; but God will grant me the grace to perform mine." (September 13th, 1595.)

Long previous to this ridiculously unjust effusion concerning the amiable sister whose heart he almost

contrived to break, the Béarnais had written the last of his long series of love-letters to Corisande. Stiff and rough was the epistle of March 1591, and not a trace was left of the old sentiment for this once dear woman, upon whose bosom he had so often slept, and whose infant child by him had died but shortly before.

"Madame," it runs, "I have sent to cause you to be spoken to on the subject of that which, to my regret, has taken place between my sister and myself. I trust that you have been capable of believing that which I say, to the effect that all your speech has only tended to blame me and foment my sister in that which she should not do. I should not have believed it of you, to whom I will only say this word: that any persons who should seek to set my sister and myself at variance will never be forgiven by me."

Such, then, was the last page in a chapter in which the good qualities of the Béarnais appear as in no way remarkable. *Le Roi s'amuse!* was the motto of Henri de Navarre, and if he could not amuse himself in one direction there was nothing to prevent him from looking next door.

The *Journal* of Lestoille says that the faithful Corisande had now lost her looks; she had become "fat, fleshy, and red in the face." Sully, commenting upon this change in the appearance of the Comtesse de Gramont, declares that "she herself became ashamed that people should say that the King had ever loved her so much." Here we think that Sully is going too far. It was never for Corisande to be ashamed of anything, unless it were of having trusted Henri de Navarre too much, and of more than half ruining herself for the sake of a most ungrateful Prince.

In the year 1597 Henri IV. appears to have recollected that his old sweetheart was still living in Béarn ; he even deigned to send a reply to a letter from her relation, the Comte de Parabère, who had been the first confidant of their loves. In this letter, in most flattering terms the King speaks of the Comtesse de Gramont.

Corisande outlived Henri de Navarre by at least ten years; she died either in the year 1620 or in 1624.

CHAPTER XXXI

The King meets "Charmante Gabrielle"

1590

THERE is probably no mistress of any of the Kings of France whose character, appearance, and attributes have excited more discussion, called forth more argument, than Gabrielle d'Estrées, who became invested with the old Bourbon title of Duchesse de Beaufort, after having first been created Marquise de Monceaux. The "Charmante Gabrielle" of the song supposed to have been written by Henri IV. was in this matter of being endowed with a title, and a grand one, quite *en règle*, as the female favourites of most of the Bourbon Kings had titles bestowed upon them, after, if they were unmarried, being usually first supplied with a merely nominal husband, who was pensioned off at once.

This remark, of course, does not refer to the three nuns whom Henri IV. took as his mistresses during the protracted siege of Paris, when he made use, in turn, of various convents outside the walls as convenient places to reside in while directing the military operations. Not being well able to provide these chaste sisters with husbands and titles, Henri made them all Abbesses of good fat Abbeys. They were Catherine de Verdun, Marie de Beauvilliers, and Angélique d'Estrées, one of

the sisters of Gabrielle, and were respectively rewarded, for the levity with which they treated their vows, with the Abbeys of Vernon, Montmartre, and Maubuisson.

The most active period of Henri's military career lasted perhaps from the year 1589, when he ascended the throne of France, until July 30th, 1593, when he renounced the Protestant religion. In the following March Henri de Navarre at length entered Paris, by the simple process of buying over the Maréchal de Brissac, the Governor, who held the city for the League.

On several occasions Henri had previously almost reduced the capital by famine, thirty thousand people having died of starvation, but the bold march from the Netherlands of the Spaniards, under the Duke of Parma, had prevented the King from reducing the city, either by starvation or assault.

Even after Henri had peacefully entered Paris, and, by becoming a Catholic, taken away the cause of the opposition of those who had refused their allegiance to a Protestant King, his troubles were by no means over ; for the League was but half suppressed.

As the Duke of Savoy, the ally of the League, was, like various Governors of provinces and cities, still in arms against the King, this latter was still constantly compelled to take the field until another four years had elapsed.

Then, at length, he was able to devote himself to that improvement of the condition of his subjects which has made the name of "le Béarnais" for ever blessed. It was only in the year 1598 that Henri IV. at last felt himself to be so much the King as to be able to do something for the Huguenots, and, braving all opposition, to give them that Edict of Nantes which brought to those

of "the religion" some measure of repose, after so many years of oppression and warfare.

During all these years, while continuing to be a General, Henri never ceased to be a lover, and the name which is associated with his, almost to the exclusion of all others, from 1590 until 1599, when she died, is that of la Charmante Gabrielle. Indeed, any historian who should attempt the task of writing an account of the reign of Henri IV. containing no mention of Gabrielle d'Estrées could not be considered as having performed his task faithfully. That there was one such is, however, evident from the following amusing extract from the preface of one of M. de Lescure's works :

"There is a man, very estimable for that matter, whom I will not name, to punish him for having been able to write a History of Henri IV. *in four volumes* without, I believe, once pronouncing the name of Gabrielle d'Estrées ! This exaggerated modesty has borne its fruit. He was crowned by the Académie, probably not without smiling himself."

The above unnamed writer was, however, wise in his generation, since, by preserving silence, he was likewise relieved from the fear of falling into a controversy which has, where the Duchesse de Beaufort is concerned, proved the bane of so many French authors.

Without going deeply ourselves into this matter, we may say that Gabrielle appears to have been a perfectly healthy and very handsome young woman ; neither blessed with too many brains nor conspicuous for the want of them. Her hair was light, her eyes were blue ; while by no means free from intrigues, she was clever enough never to be actually found out. She was not given, like Corisande, to thoughts of "getting even"



GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES, DUCHESSE DE BEAUFORT

with her Royal lover, nor, like Henriette d'Entragues, to sulky fits, spitefulness, and revengeful projects aiming at the King's life. Always light as a bird, she was ready to cheer Henri in his dreary hours of disappointment; but, on the other hand, after she had gone to live openly with the King, never required cheering herself. She never, until the time that Sully opposed her marriage, suffered from low spirits, but always, on the contrary, retained the same amiable contentment and good humour. She, moreover, possessed the art of dissipating her lover's fits of ill humour.

That a woman of this disposition would make a charming companion for a King, or any other gentleman of less exalted rank, can be easily conceived. We will now proceed to mention, first, by what means Gabrielle became the King's companion, and then the circumstances in connection with her bringing up before Henri de Navarre had ever heard of her existence.

Her father's name was Antoine d'Estrées and that of her mother Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière. She was the fifth daughter of her parents and born at their Château de Cœuvres, in Picardy, in the year 1571.

After various youthful adventures, to be reported presently, this young lady had been, in the year 1590, secretly hiding in her father's castle her lover, the young Duc de Bellegarde. M. le Grand, as he was termed, being Grand Equerry to the King, after being concealed for a couple of days at Cœuvres, returned to join his master, Henri IV., at Compiègne. To him, with all the incautiousness of youth, Bellegarde descanted upon the charms of his mistress with such unrestrained enthusiasm that the King became all on fire with the contagion of his subject's passion. Already in love, Henri insisted

upon being taken, upon the first opportunity, to see the young beauty, and thus be able to judge of her charms in person. Circumstances of the war, however, compelled Henri to go elsewhere, notably to Senlis, where he employed his hours of leisure with the nun, Marie de Beauvilliers, who became Abbesse de Montmartre.

Eventually, upon the return of the King and Bellegarde to Compiègne, when the latter demanded permission to go and see Gabrielle, Henri insisted upon accompanying him. According to the disdained coquette, Mademoiselle de Guise, who became Princesse de Conti, in her spiteful work, *Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*, " then it was that the poor Bellegarde became all at once the author of his own misfortune, since he lost by this interview the liberty to live with his mistress in the happiness of his fortune. So true is it that we have more to guard ourselves from ourselves than from our enemies ! "

What took place was this. The gallant Béarnais, during his first meeting with the lovely Mademoiselle d'Estrées, had, so he imagined, but little difficulty in persuading her that it would suit her book better to become his mistress than to remain on intimate terms with either the Duc de Bellegarde or the Duc de Longueville, who were constantly flying at each other's throats on her account. Henri then formally conveyed to both of these great nobles the intimation that, in future, the only friend of the other sex who would be permitted to Gabrielle d'Estrées would be himself.

Longueville took the matter reasonably and retired gracefully, but not so Bellegarde, who was beloved by Gabrielle, and who joined her tears to his. She had no intention to keep her promises to the King to entirely give up M. le Grand, and, accordingly, made a bold

effort to assert her independence. "As women are more violent than men in their passions, Mademoiselle d'Estrées was far from behaving as moderately as Bellegarde. She even lost her temper, and told the King, with extreme heat, that she had no idea of being controlled in her inclinations; that violence would only bring about distrust and her hatred, and especially so if she were prevented from taking, as a husband, a man of whom her parents approved. Her sorrow even went so far that she left Mantes without saying good-bye to the King, and returned to Picardy."

Henri de Navarre, who was terribly in earnest about this young lady, was struck as by a thunderbolt at her violent self-assertion and consequent departure. Always stimulated by opposition, he determined, at any cost, to bring to reason the fair enchantress by whom he had been bewitched.

From Mantes, where he was, to Cœuvres was a distance of over twenty miles, and the way led through forests beset by parties of the enemy. Could he but succeed in traversing this dangerous country, and in obtaining an interview with the disdainful Gabrielle, the King imagined that she would be moved to admiration at his exploit and to compassion for his pain.

Taking with him but five followers who were, without any hope of personal gain, compelled to share their Monarch's amorous quest, Henri started off on his perilous journey. He arrived safely at a spot distant nine miles from the Château de Cœuvres. Here, disguising himself in the ragged garb of a peasant, and carrying a bundle of straw on his head, he started to walk. By his disguise he contrived to pass unobserved various parties belonging to the League, but it must

have been but a weary King who eventually staggered under his burden into the castle courtyard.

He had managed to send warning of his coming on the previous night, and anticipated a triumphant reception, vainly imagining that his foolish conduct would appear sublime in the eyes of the woman whom he hoped to captivate. Great indeed was his disillusion! He found Gabrielle with her sister Juliette, afterwards Duchesse de Villars, on a balcony. She received the King with the greatest frigidity, and left the Royal peasant, after telling him that he was so ugly in his ridiculous disguise that she could not even look at him! Juliette, left alone with the King, made all the excuses in her power for her sister, who, however, did not return. Henri had, therefore, nothing left to do but once more to hazard his crown and his life by getting back to Mantes in the same manner that he had left it.

Upon his return he had to listen to severe reproaches from both Du Plessis-Mornay and Sully on the subject of his folly. These the disappointed Henri took in good part, for he cared not what was said provided that he could but regain the presence of his charmer.

Nevertheless the King's advisers gave him so clearly to understand that, for the sake of the army of which he was the head, as for the sake of the Kingdom, he could play no more of these tricks, that he determined to resort to others, less foolish but more unworthy.

Making use of his authority as King, he now commanded the Marquis d'Estrées to come to Mantes, with all his family. As an excuse, he gave him a seat at his Council-table. Now, although Antoine d'Estrées was forced to obey the Royal command, the King profited but little himself. Constantly compelled to be off at

the head of his troops, in one direction or another, Bellegarde and Longueville, left behind at Mantes, were those who reaped all the pleasure that was to be gained by the presence of Gabrielle in that city.

When the King returned from his expeditions these rivals of one another had to efface themselves in the presence of Henri IV., while Bellegarde merely dissimulated his affection, which continued to be returned. Longueville, finding the game he was playing a dangerous one by which he might lose his head, eventually withdrew altogether from the *partie*. He obtained his letters back from Mademoiselle d'Estrées, and pretended to return all of hers, while dishonourably retaining some, with a view to holding the whip hand over her on some future occasion.

By some the accidental death of the Duc de Longueville a few years later, by a musket-ball when a salute was being fired to celebrate his entry of Dourlens, was attributed to the revenge of Gabrielle for his act of meanness in this matter. But there seems to have been no reason whatever, other than the inclination to speak ill of the King's fair favourite, for coupling the name of Gabrielle with a crime so improbable and so useless.

At length the father of Gabrielle, who, the girl's absolutely impossible mother having left him with a lover, remained her sole protector, became tired of being twitted with being the too-complaisant parent of an immoral daughter. The Marquis therefore determined that she should be provided with a husband, in the shape of a humpbacked and elderly widower, named Nicolas d'Amerval, Sieur de Liancourt, a man with a family of fourteen. Gabrielle moaned and groaned, wept and sobbed in vain, for the King had laughingly but decidedly

agreed with the father that a protector must be provided for his daughter's honour. It was, however, promised to Gabrielle by the King that he would carry her off from M. de Liancourt on the night of her marriage, whereupon the unwilling bride ceased her lamentations. These, for that matter, were made considerable sport of by the poets of the day, who did not consider that the young lady had any cause for such excessive protestation, having long years since lost any shadow of innocence she might have possessed.

When eventually the marriage took place, Henri was unfortunately prevented by business elsewhere from redeeming his promise to the bride, a fact which tended still further to the amusement of the Court wits. Notably did that clever poet, the Abbé du Perron, celebrate the sorrows of Gabrielle in verse, which, in itself excellent, was, however, of a questionable nature. In February 1591 the King, however, ordered M. de Liancourt, who was most unwilling, to consent to a decree of divorce, and the abhorred husband was sent about his business. To us nowadays, taking this fact in view, the whole affair of this marriage appears to have been nothing but an act of folly from beginning to end. Far from helping in any way to shield Gabrielle's good name, it only served to cover her with a ridicule which fell equally upon the shoulders of Henri IV.

The only person who can possibly have benefited in any way by these ridiculous nuptials was Gabrielle's father, Antoine d'Estrées, since, from the time of their celebration, he was able to wash his hands of his daughter altogether, and was put to no further expense for her maintenance.

CHAPTER XXXII

Gabrielle and the Real Henri IV

1590—1592

While the father of the new favourite himself forcibly described his Castle of Cœuvres as "a rabbit-warren of female improprieties," Tallemant des Réaux frankly informs the world that "they called those six sisters and their brother the seven deadly sins." He is writing in the life-time of this brother, who, after having been brought up to the Church and appointed in his youth Bishop of Lyons and a Cardinal, had become a soldier when his elder brother had been killed at the siege of Laon. By the influence of his sister he had become the Maréchal d'Estrées long before Tallemant des Réaux mentioned him in such flattering terms.

If the six daughters and the brother were such as described they were distinctly to be pitied, for their viciousness was the result of their training. They owed it to the fact of having possessed for a mother one who, without being given to violent crimes, was the incarnation of all that was bad in woman.

The Maréchal de Bassompierre mentions, in his *Nouveaux Mémoires*, published in 1802, from the manuscript which came from the collection of the President Hénault, many details concerning this depraved woman, Françoise Babou, of whom he says that she made no

scruple in trafficking in her own daughters, and also mentions that she was eventually killed at Issoire, by the side of her lover, M. d'Alègre. With this gentleman, who was her brother-in-law, she had run away from her home, taking one of her daughters with her.

There is plenty of independent evidence of the fact that the mother of Gabrielle was one of the worst of that type of *grande dame*, utterly devoid of all sense of morality, that flourished all too abundantly on the fruitful soil of France during the period immediately succeeding the Renaissance. Tallemant des Réaux, for instance, cannot speak badly enough of the stock from which she sprung: "This Madame d'Estrées was of the House of La Bourdaisière, the most fertile race of lively ladies that has ever existed in France. They say that one Madame de la Bourdaisière openly boasted of having been the lover of Pope Clement VII. at Nice, of the Emperor Charles V. when he passed through France, and of the King François I. One can add up," continues this gossip of the sixteenth century, "as many as twenty-five or twenty-six of them, some nuns, some married, who openly mis-behaved themselves." Tallemant does not willingly relinquish this improper bevy of ladies, and even publishes a witty quatrain illustrative of the fact that their improprieties were allegorically referred to in the coat of arms of the House of La Bourdaisière. With a mother springing from such a family, and in her own person an example of its worst traditions, what chance could there be for the daughters?

These were to be pitied, more than blamed, for the levity which marked their career, especially as from an early age Madame d'Estrées looked upon them as articles of commerce.

Thus while one of them, named Diane, was sold to the Duc d'Epernon, whose daughter by her became an Abbess at Metz, to d'Epernon it was that Françoise Babou entrusted the first deal which she made of her daughter Gabrielle, then of the age of sixteen. The *mignon* had no scruple about offering the child, already beautiful and possessing an elegant figure, to his depraved master Henri III., who bought her, without having seen her, upon his favourite's recommendation alone.

Henri III. sent the sum of six thousand crowns for the girl by a favourite courtier named Montigny. This messenger, however, cheated Madame d'Estrées out of two thousand crowns, which he kept, and bought the youthful Gabrielle for only four thousand. When the King learned of this circumstance, later, Montigny lost his favour with his master, who was greatly enraged. The Duc de Joyeuse, however, eventually made peace between this pair of girl-buying scamps—the King and the courtier.

The degraded King soon tired of Gabrielle ; he said that she was "just as white and as slim as the Queen," and that he did not require any more ladies of that sort about his person. The mother then trafficked her fifth daughter to various other persons in turn. Among these were Zamet, the rich Moorish banker, subsequently the boon companion of Henri IV., and at whose palatial residence Gabrielle eventually found her death by poison. Another lover, for a year, was the Cardinal de Guise, the brother of the Duc, and like him murdered at Blois by the King in December 1588. The Cardinal, however, relinquished his young mistress upon finding that the infamous Marquise d'Estrées had likewise sold her to the Duc de Longueville, who was seeing her in secret.

Now it was that M. le Grand (the Duc de Bellegarde) first came upon the scene, a nobleman who evidently loved Gabrielle from the first, and who would probably have eventually married the young girl had it not been for the arbitrary action of Henri de Navarre in taking her from him by force.

King Henri III. had evidently retained the daughter of Antoine d'Estrées at the Louvre, since it was during the year 1589, and before his flight to Blois, that he took a childish delight in throwing the young girl and his favourite Bellegarde into each other's society. About this circumstance Bassompierre remarks :

"M. le Grand, who was then in high favour, found her very much to his liking, and the King, who only sought to please him, made himself their go-between. He caused them to dress in the same colours at his balls, made them dance together, and was delighted when people praised them as a handsome couple. But when things were at this point Madame d'Estrées carried her off back to Cœuvres, with her sisters Denan and Diane, and shortly afterwards, accompanied only by her youngest daughter Juliette, she left her husband to go to Alègre, the Governor of Issoire, whom she loved."

After the departure of their mother with her sixth daughter, the remaining girls of the family of d'Estrées were left to run wild and to do as they chose at Cœuvres. We are not, therefore, surprised to learn that they were courted and loved by various gentlemen of the neighbourhood, nor that the Duc de Longueville contrived to see Gabrielle again when passing by the Château de Cœuvres, while Bellegarde was even enabled to come and stay there secretly.

Such, then, was the youthful career of the young lady whom Voltaire so highly glorified in his famous poem in honour of Henri IV., called the *Henriade*.

The great poet and philosopher, however, considerably overshot the mark when he sang of Gabrielle :

> Son cœur, né pour aimer, mais fier et généreux,
> D'aucun amant encore n'avait reçu les vœux ;
> Semblable, en son printemps, à la rose nouvelle
> Qui renferme en naissant sa beauté naturelle,
> Cache aux vents amoureux les trésors de son sein,
> Et s'ouvre aux doux rayons d'un jour pur et serein.

Historians differ as to the year in which Gabrielle d'Estrées was born, some having set the date of her birth in 1565. It seems, however, that those who follow Dreux du Radier, and mention her natal day as having been in 1571, are correct. This would bring her to her twentieth year by the time that she met Henri IV., who was then between thirty-eight and thirty-nine. Radier describes her at this epoch of her life as having the loveliest head in the world, with quantities of blonde hair, and blue eyes of a dazzling brilliancy. Her colouring he likens to that of the Graces, in which the lily overcomes the rose ; her nose was, he remarks, well made, but he does not describe its shape. Concerning her other points Dreux du Radier is so enthusiastic that it is indeed no wonder if a Prince of the temperament of Henri IV. fell an easy victim to the owner of so many charms. She had, it would appear, "a mouth upon which reposed both sportiveness and love, and perfectly furnished ; that turn of the face which painters take as a model ; a small ear, lively and well-bordered ; her bosom of a beauty to make one forget all the others ; the figure,

the arms, the hand, the foot, all corresponded to the head, and formed an ensemble which one could not admire without suffering for so doing."

An attractive young woman, surely! Even the ear, lively and well bordered (*vive et bien bordée*), seems to imply something agreeable, although exactly what it is we confess ourselves as being unable to realise.

Why is it, by the way, while the pen-pictures of these noted beauties, such as Marguerite and Gabrielle, portray them to us as being so admirable, so entrancing in every respect that men are ready to die for their possession, that not a painter has been able to do the same? From the pictures that have come down to us of nearly all of these beautiful Queens, and beautiful mistresses of Kings, including those of the later Bourbons and of Charles II. of England, one is apt to turn away with a feeling of sadness, of disappointment, a sense somehow of having been taken in. "If they were only like that, after all," we inly exclaim, "then any little *grisette* of the period, dressed up appropriately, would have done for the portrait just as well!" There are, of course, a few exceptions—Isabella of Portugal, wife of the Emperor Charles V., by Titian, the nude picture of Diane de Poitiers, by Primaticcio, and a couple of the paintings of Marie Antoinette, by Madame le Brun, are among these; but, as a rule, alas! the wielder of the brush has as signally failed as he of the pen has succeeded—and usually in bare prose.

In making the above reflections we had before us half a dozen pictures of both Marguerite de Valois and Gabrielle. In vain, for the hundredth time, we sought for a trace of those excessive charms so glorified by Brantôme, so confidently dwelt upon by Dreux du

Radier. Finally, with a becoming feeling of resignation, we came to the conclusion that it must have been for the good of posterity that the kind-hearted painters sought to spare those of a later day from the dire effects of such fatal beauties, as experienced, in their own times, by the hearts of men.

Having arrived at the above comforting conclusion, which we trust may be found equally satisfactory to the reader as to ourselves, we cannot refuse ourselves the satisfaction of presenting to the said reader's eyes an amusing little panegyric in verse upon the eyes of Gabrielle. Porchères, the author of the quatrain, was, it is said, rewarded for his effusion by a yearly pension of fourteen hundred livres!

Ce ne sont pas des yeux, ce sont plutôt des dieux;
Ils ont dessus les rois la puissance absolue.
Dieux? Non, ce sont des cieux; ils ont la couleur bleue
Et le mouvement prompt comme celui des cieux.

If some of the painters of prose-portraits of this bewitching mistress succeeded in drawing a picture which has lasted until our time, without probably any other intention than that of writing for their contemporaries, the painters in verse we can only imagine to have written for Henri IV. and Gabrielle alone, with a view to the lining of their own pockets at the time they wrote. Some of these so-called poems were ridiculous indeed; but the vanity of their subject was greater, and, since she controlled the King, when he had any money the poets who happened to present their poems of praise at the proper time were bound to obtain their share.

The verses of a certain Guillaume du Sable have a wild peculiarity all their own. They describe Gabrielle's

beauty, for instance, by saying that *her nose decorates both her cheeks*, and by praising her lovely double chin !

> Son beau nez décorant et l'une et l'autre joue
> Sur lesquelles Amour à toute heure se joue.
> Heureux qui peut baiser sa bouche cinabrine,
> Ses lèvres de corail, sa denture yvoirine,
> Son beau double menton, l'une des sept beautés.

The rest of this poem descends to a strange familiarity of description, which will hardly bear reproduction nowadays. As will be noticed, from its peculiar adjectives *cinabrine* and *yvoirine*, it is written in what is termed the French Renaissance style, and to reproduce it would therefore be too much like putting into words the Renaissance picture just mentioned of the famous mistress of Henri II. painted in the nude.

With so many descriptions, which are apparently authentic, in existence, it is strange how few there are which describe Gabrielle's favourite tastes and occupations. That they were not literary we know, for the sole book that we hear of her ever possessing is a *Book of Hours*, into which she dipped occasionally when she found a minute or two to spare. The best epitome of her character is probably that contained in a couple of lines of the famous critic, M. Sainte-Beuve, who remarks : " She was completely a woman in her tastes, in her ambitions, and even in her very faults."

When this is said of Gabrielle there is perhaps no need for more ; therefore let us now turn our thoughts to the already grey-bearded man whom she had captivated, and see what he was like in 1591, at the age of thirty-eight.

Dreux du Radier gives his portrait at this period in the following words : " Henri, tall, well-made, a full

figure, quick eyes, a broad forehead, a long nose, a warlike air, and, with a long beard, already grey, was not by any means a *mignon* of the bedchamber, and toilet accessories were unnecessary to him to please a woman of the taste of Angélique."

The slovenliness of the Béarnais which is here referred to is well known, but that all women could not put up with it without a certain feeling of disgust is evidenced by the attitude taken on the subject by his wife Marguerite. This fastidious Princess, according to the *Divorce Satyrique*, had, during her residence at Nérac, even shown the ill taste of accusing her husband of being dirty.

When, in the year 1584, the King of Navarre went to meet "La Reine Margot" after her first residence at Agen, which succeeded her expulsion from the Louvre, he is said to have done so reluctantly, as he bore her a grudge for certain bygone matters which had given him cause for irritation. Among these were the excessive epicureanism of Marguerite, which caused her to indulge in black silken sheets in that chamber lighted by a thousand candles in which she affected to receive with repugnance a husband who returned all hot and dusty from the chase. She then offended his susceptibilities greatly by ostentatiously causing her bed to be perfumed and the bed-clothing changed whenever he occupied it. "Some women might likewise," remarked Marguerite one day angrily, "be able to put up with a husband who came to table unwashed," but that, for her part, if he continued to do so before he sat down with her, she trusted that he would find it no reason for complaint if she caused her women to wash the King of Navarre's feet before she would permit him to sit at table with the daughter, grand-daughter, and sister of Kings of France!

From the above it is evident that, far from going to the extremes of dress and adornment, fashionable in those days for men at the Court of the Valois, Henri was indeed careless to excess, and far too ready to carry the manners and customs of the camp with him to the boudoir. Marguerite therefore undoubtedly had cause to complain, but she might have probably had more success in reforming his slovenly habits had she set about the matter in a less haughty manner.

While various historians, Michelet among the number, refer to the satyr-like appearance of this Prince, to get a good, general idea of Henri IV., as man, lover and soldier, one cannot seek a better source than the pages of Lescure. That author remarks: "The threefold character of his face denotes that he is at once jovial, cordial, and warlike. One scents in him at once the gay storyteller, the good companion, the *cheval-léger*, as Sully says, the man of short recitals, long repasts, hot kisses. In Henri IV. we see François I. softened, toned down, ennobled.

"The inflexibility of the Knight-King, the weather-beaten soldier-King, as seen in the dry and hard profile, in the heavy extremities of François, is replaced by malicious courtesy and the *spirituel* good nature of the Béarnais. To what can one attribute the difference of the welcome made to two Princes equally brave, gallant to women, and in genius, equally surrounded by artists and poets, if it be not that François I. was wanting in the charm which Henri IV. possessed?

"It was impossible to see him without loving him. On seeing him women blushed, children laughed, old men wept. To the first he recalled the lover, to the second the father, to the latter possibly the son. No

King was more a man. All the secret is there. The Henri of 1592 is no longer the Béarnais of the restless and suffering days, worn out by domestic struggle, tormented with presentiments of coming ingratitude and vengeance. Now it is the Béarnais, militant, triumphing in the sweet hours of his apogee, of the apotheosis of his fortune. It is Henri IV. happy, smiling at Gabrielle and at France, his other mistress. His manly face, coloured by the purple of a blood which is still rich, is illumined with glory and with love. There is in him a sympathetic happiness. His dilated pupil sparkles with every hope. His nostrils tremble and his lips palpitate. All his traits breathe the ultimate and powerful harmony of spirit and senses. He is all movement, all action, all life. Last of all, he is King—the King of the finest Kingdom in the universe, after heaven."

The above may be somewhat extravagant, but the enthusiasm of the writer can easily be shared by the reader. It explains, better than anything else, what we would seek to find in Henri IV.—what, in fact, was Henri IV. As we read this glowing panegyric we feel likewise that we approve of the author's simile when he finally exclaims: "I will not choose, as his symbol, the he-goat or the satyr of the pamphlets of the Huguenots or the sermons of the League: I would choose the cock, the French bird *par excellence*, raised up on his nervous spurs, beating his wings, and saluting with his startling voice the intoxicating sun of glory, of peace, and of love!" Lescure is right! Decidedly Henri IV. was, in many respects, the prototype of M. Rostand's *Chantecler!*

CHAPTER XXXIII

Henri's Jealousy of Bellegarde

1591—1596

In one way, the political action of Gabrielle d'Estrées was very great—so great as to have influenced the fortunes of France for good or ill for two hundred years: she persuaded Henri de Navarre to abjure his religion and become a Catholic. The Protestant Sully seconded the advice of the mistress, said to be inclined to Protestantism. Had Henri not followed it, although, by maintaining a constant state of civil warfare, he might possibly have been able to hold the throne for his time, he would certainly never have controlled the whole Kingdom of France. Nor would he have been able eventually to marry again and peacefully rear up a brood of Bourbons, whom the whole country should recognise as the lawful successors to the Crown.

Some Catholic French authors have extolled to the skies this action of the King's pretty paramour, at the same time that others, in a Puritan spirit, have condemned the levity of Henri's famous letter to her, when he had decided to take her advice. "I am about to take the perilous leap. I send you sixty cavaliers to bring you back to me."

The arguments of the religionists are, however,

altogether out of place, for it was pure policy—not religion—that prompted the change of faith. While Henri may or may not have made use of the oft-quoted phrase, "Paris is well worth a Mass," it was his acceptation of the Mass which secured to him the Crown; and Gabrielle, who knew that such would be the case, persuaded him to accept it accordingly, for she had her own kettle of fish to fry.

Whereas the Protestant ministers were making a loud outcry about the doubly adulterous union of Madame de Liancourt and their King, the Catholic authorities were far more indulgent. They were prepared, so they hinted, in the case of the King's conversion, to accept the extremely irregular divorce of Gabrielle, which was, indeed, on the ridiculous grounds of nullity and non-consummation, to which terms M. de Liancourt had been compelled to subscribe by the King.

Likewise the Churchmen, in negotiation with both Henri and his mistress, said that they would give their aid with the Pope in the matter of obtaining a divorce for the King from Marguerite, in case that he should become a Catholic. Thus there would be thrown open to Gabrielle the opportunity of marriage with Henri and a share of Henri's throne. This it was, more than any other consideration, which decided Gabrielle to throw all her influence with her Royal lover in favour of his desertion of the Huguenot faith, and thus it was that, although really attached to the Protestant religion, Henri agreed "to take the perilous leap."

Although, from early associations, attached to his mother's faith, Gabrielle knew that the religious feelings —that is to say, the sectarian feelings—of Henri were not strongly developed. He had long before his union

with her expressed the opinion, in a letter: "Those who follow their conscience straightly are of my religion, and I am of that of all who are brave and good." Moreover, while discussing the question with Du Plessis-Mornay, he remarked optimistically: "Perhaps, also, the difference between the two religions is not so great as the animosity of those who preach them. One day, by my authority, I will try to arrange all that."

Before the solemn abjuration made by Henri IV. at Saint-Denis on July 25th, 1593, Gabrielle was in the habit of following him about to the various camps wherever he might be. Her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, one of the rotten stock of La Bourdaisière, had assisted her, in the first instance, to run away from her husband, and accompanied her to join the King at the siege of Chartres. For thus acting as chaperon, both Madame de Sourdis and her husband were subsequently the recipients of many Royal favours and rewards.

During the long-spun-out siege, or rather blockade, of Paris Gabrielle lived in two separate residences. One of them was at the summit of Montmartre, the other on the hill which overlooked Saint-Denis. In these two dwellings Henri frequently visited her, but during those early years the love-stricken monarch was compelled to endure tortures from jealousy of his mistress.

Had it not been that this fact is attested by his own letters to his beloved, as we will presently show, we should have been inclined entirely to disregard the various good stories told of the manner in which Gabrielle was on various occasions almost surprised with Bellegarde by Henri de Navarre. One's natural inclination is to set them all down to the malevolence of Mademoiselle de Guise, Princesse de Conti, who

sought for herself the place that Gabrielle occupied. Even the worthy *Conseiller* of the Parliament, Pierre de l'Étoile, or Lestoille, is not above suspicion, in his *Journal* and *Mémoires*, of having a little spiteful feeling while retailing the ill-natured gossip of Gabrielle's bed-chamber woman, who went by the nickname of La Rousse. Would such a fact be unnatural, when it is considered that, during a period of the greatest distress throughout the Kingdom, when the King himself was often at starvation point with his armies, Gabrielle was always gorgeously arrayed in silks and jewels, had heaps of money to spend, and lived in the greatest magnificence hardly to be distinguished from Royal State ?

Such contrasts are apt to beget feelings of spite in Parliamentary chroniclers like Lestoille no less than in the bosoms of cast-off mistresses of the moment, to which class Mademoiselle de Guise would seem to have belonged. This young Princess had another reason than her jealousy of the King for speaking ill of Gabrielle : this was her jealousy of Bellegarde, with whom she herself indulged in follying and philandering to an unlimited extent.

When, by the very arbitrary command of the King, the good-looking young Roger de Saint-Larry, Duc de Bellegarde, was forced openly to give up his Gabrielle, until then his very own, not being able to resign himself to continual and complete separation, he sought some object near enough to his former sweetheart to justify him in hanging about within easy reach of her society.

This object he found in the fair Mademoiselle de Guise, as this young Princess, although disappointed and vicious at heart, thought it to her interests to show the

greatest friendliness towards the King's new favourite. Being by no means difficult to approach, and only too anxious to take from Gabrielle the lover of her heart, the future Princesse de Conti met the handsome Bellegarde more than half-way, and flung herself into his arms.

Alas for her! while her passion became real that of the Duc was more than half simulated, while, his liaison being no secret, it served as a cloak to his remaining a great deal nearer to Gabrielle than the King liked to see him; still, for a time, Henri could not find any sufficient reason to justify him in sending away the man whom he had robbed of his lady-love.

The good intelligence between Gabrielle and Bellegarde, however, continued, with the result that, upon many occasions during the King's absence, he found the means of visiting her in secret. This is all that is certain; but Gabrielle's rival and other gossips have taken care to leave on record various details, which they may either have invented themselves or which may have been the invention of the woman called La Rousse, who is given the name of Arphure by Vanel in his *Galanteries des rois de France*.

This woman is painted in the blackest colours by the Duc de Sully, who states that both she and her husband were treated to six years' imprisonment in the Bastille for having dared to spread reports injurious to the King's mistress. Such punishment for libel might be considered a little severe nowadays, especially as it seems unlikely that the woman or her husband had any opportunity of defending themselves in an open trial. It must, however, be remembered that Henri was a humane King, and under any other it is more than probable that, having

been thrust into the Bastille, they would have been forgotten and left to rot there till they died, whether innocent or guilty. Henri, however, in all probability remembered sufficient about them to order their release when, immediately after the death of Gabrielle, he promptly forgot her and took a new mistress.

One of these stories, as told by Mademoiselle de Guise, is as follows :

In spite of the King's suspicions of Bellegarde, he was never able to find out anything, until one day something occurred to confirm them strongly. He had gone off to one of his country-houses at a distance, while Bellegarde had pretended to make a start for Compiègne, and Gabrielle had remained in bed, saying that she was unwell.

Bellegarde returned, and was introduced into a little cabinet by the confidante La Rousse, and there hidden until Gabrielle had got rid of those about her. Then he was able to join his old sweetheart, and assure her that she alone reigned in his heart. Suddenly there was a terrible commotion, for the King, too, had returned in a hurry and a very suspicious humour.

Bellegarde was instantly hurried by La Rousse into the little cabinet, of which she alone possessed the key, and locked in there. It looked out over the garden by one window, but was some way above the ground. Now it was that the trouble began, for, " The King had no sooner entered than he asked for La Rousse to bring him some confitures, and said that if she could not be found some one was to be brought to open that door or break it down. God knows in what alarm were those two persons, so close on being discovered !

" Gabrielle, seeing that the King was hammering on

the door to break it in, pretended that the noise greatly upset her; but the King appeared to be deaf, and continued to try to break the door. Bellegarde, seeing that there was nothing else to do, threw himself out of the window into the garden, and was fortunate enough, although it was pretty high, not to receive much injury.

"La Rousse, who had hidden herself so as not to have to open the door, now came in, very much upset, making the excuse that she had no idea that she was wanted, and she went off to fetch that which the King demanded with such impatience.

"Gabrielle, seeing that she had not been found out, reproached Henri a thousand times for his jealousy."

And so the story goes on, ending up with Henri humbly begging pardon, while vowing that jealousy was but the purest sign of love.

The above anecdote must, we consider, be taken with a large grain of salt. Another story, more amusing but more ridiculous, is told by half a dozen memoir-writers, including that most forceful Princess Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, second wife of Philippe I., Duc d'Orléans, and mother of the Regent. The details vary a little in each account, but the main point is the same in all.

As related by Madame, the Regent's mother, it runs that Henri IV., having returned on purpose to catch Bellegarde with his mistress, found an elegant repast for two spread in her chamber. As he entered the room the artful Béarnais saw the last of Bellegarde's toes vanishing under the bed.

In the best of good humour, and with many a sarcastic, merry quip, the King sat down to enjoy the dinner which had been prepared for another cavalier,

but gave no vent to his suspicions. Suddenly, taking a roast partridge, and placing it on a piece of bread, Henri flung them under the bed. To Gabrielle's exclamation of astonishment the King responded, with a shout of laughter, "Why, Madame, surely you know that all the world must live!"

After this merry jest Henri de Navarre rose and left, contented with having given his mistress a good fright. Various letters display the jealousy felt by the King, but at the same time show how ready he is to believe Gabrielle's protestations that it has no cause for existence—or, at all events, a readiness to pretend to do so. One letter commences with the words, "You well know the resolution that I have taken to complain no longer. I now take another, to no longer become angry." In another, after commencing by saying that, in accordance with Gabrielle's command, he will banish all his doubts, being evidently unwilling to wound her feelings, Henri continues as follows:

"I will protest, my dear mistress, that that which I may allege of the offences I have received is not on account of having any remains of bitterness left in the soul, feeling too well satisfied with the trouble you have taken to content me, but only in order to show you my just causes of suspicion. You know how greatly offended I arrived in your presence, on account of the journey of my competitor [the Duc de Bellegarde]. The power that your eyes had upon me saved you the half of my complaints. You satisfied me with the mouth, not the heart, as it appeared; but if I had known that which I have learned since being at Saint-Denis, concerning the said journey, I would not have seen you, but would have broken off, flat."

We notice in this letter that, as he proceeds, the King's feelings are gradually getting the better of him; he begins mildly enough, but becomes more and more reproachful while writing and thinking over his wrongs. In spite of himself he now lets himself go. "What is there that you can promise me after what you have done? What faith can you swear to me but that which you have doubly broken? Deeds are required—no longer talk of 'I will do'—but 'I do.' Make up your mind, then, my mistress, to have only one servitor." Henri continues this letter with a sneer at his rival, whom he calls Dead-leaf (*Feuille-morte*) on account of his sallow hue, and accuses of having shown fear before the Leaguers. He, however, ends it in the most amiable and tender manner: "I long so greatly to see you that I would willingly, to reach you as soon as this letter, shorten my life by four years. My love can be altered by nothing in the world—except a rival."

In this manner, whether present or absent, Henri continued to quarrel and squabble with Gabrielle on the subject of his rival until after the birth of her second child. Her first son was born in June 1594, at the Château de Coucy, near Laon. When he was named César the courtiers, who were delighted with the constant quarrels concerning Bellegarde, enjoyed themselves very much with a *bon mot*, which they pretended to take as being a serious fact. This was a statement that the King had not named his first-born by Gabrielle Alexandre, lest people should say he was Alexandre Le Grand (Alexander the Great), and so named because he was the son of M. le Grand; in other words, of Bellegarde.

When, a year or two later, a second son made his appearance, Henri IV. made up his mind that he could stand the presence of M. le Grand no longer. The Grand Equerry was accordingly angrily told by the King to leave his presence and not to show his face again until he came back to the Court with a wife. The spiteful story of the circumstances leading up to this dismissal is that there had previously been a disagreeable scene with Gabrielle, after Praslin, the Captain of the Guards, had been sent to arrest, and kill, Bellegarde in Gabrielle's apartments. This occurred after Beringhen, the first *valet de chambre*, had taken the King a letter he had found, to say that M. le Grand would be there. Praslin, being the friend of both of the lovers, made so much noise in the orders that he gave to the archers under his command, and took so much time in clumsily marshalling them outside the doors of Gabrielle's apartments, that Bellegarde had ample time to make his escape.

Gabrielle bitterly reproached the King for his suspicions, and when he replied, complaining of Bellegarde's letter, swore that she had never even seen any such letter, if there had been one it had been a forgery, and so on. In the end Henri IV. apologised to his mistress for the insult that he had put upon her, but he cut the Gordian knot where Bellegarde was concerned. M. le Grand had accordingly to give way, and we can well imagine that Gabrielle was by this time as glad as the King to see the last of an old lover who took advantage of his former relations with the King's *maîtresse en titre* to help her so frequently into mischief which brought her little satisfaction but great trouble.

The Duc de Bellegarde eventually returned to the Court with a young wife. He had obeyed the King's

orders and married Anne de Bueil, daughter of Honoré de Bueil, Seigneur de Fontaines.

It is to be noted that, after this marriage, we never hear the name of any other lover being coupled with that of Gabrielle, while concerning Bellegarde the King's jealous fears were for ever laid at rest.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Gabrielle d'Estrées almost Queen

1594—1598

In the whole course of French history no favourite of any King was ever treated with such marks of open respect as Gabrielle d'Estrées. Whereas we see other celebrated Royal mistresses magnificently established, allowed by their rapacity to prey upon the people or accompanying the various ill-living Kings in their coaches, sometimes even by the side of the reigning Queens, these women but remained the mistress in the eyes of the Monarch as in the eyes of the population. The difference where Gabrielle d'Estrées was concerned was that, while endeavouring himself to look upon her in the light of a wife, it was in the position of a Queen that Henri IV. sought to impose her upon his subjects.

After the birth of Madame de Liancourt's first son César, in June 1594, having previously created this lady Marquise de Monceaux and bestowed upon her a splendid castle of that name, which he had had built for her, Henri IV. publicly legitimated her son. In the deed registering the legitimacy of this boy, under the name of "César Monsieur," Henri spoke of the mother as one whose society he had sought with a view to her giving him the heir which he had never had by the

Queen, owing to her withdrawal of herself from his society for ten years. While speaking of Gabrielle in terms befitting the most honourable of women, the King expressed himself as hopeful that the son "springing from such a stock would produce many fruits to this State."

Then, on September 15th of that same year, the King made a triumphant entrance into Paris with his mistress, by which ceremonial he sought to impress upon the public mind the fact, no matter if in some out-of-the-way corner of Auvergne, called Usson, a former Queen of France still existed, that here, with him, was the real actual reigning Queen, one who shared his glories, his triumphs, and his throne.

The King himself, dressed in grey spotted with gold, bestrode a magnificent grey charger. He rode behind a regal open litter, covered with pearls and glittering with diamonds, in which reclined the triumphant mistress, nobly attired in black satin slashed with white. The whole of the garrisons of Mantes and Saint-Denys marched in advance, also the civil officials and the Sheriffs of the city. At the Cathedral of Notre-Dame all the *conseillers* of the Parliament awaited the King and his mistress in solemn state, while within the sacred fane the *Te Deum* was sung, as though to celebrate some great victory. Around the King and the lady was a brilliant *cortège* of the greatest nobles of France, and the visage of the King was all bright and smiling as, with hat constantly in hand, he saluted all the pretty ladies and demoiselles who hung out of the windows to wave their hands and handkerchiefs. All around the people shouted "Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi!"

It was the moment of the victory of Gabrielle, the hour which silenced all her detractors, and rendered her

supreme. This publicly established credit of the mistress, far from diminishing, went on constantly increasing ; nor can we say that she proved herself unworthy of the position in which she found herself placed. Gabrielle never spoke unkindly of any one, she never wilfully made any enemies ; to her it was that France owed the presence of that splendid Minister but disagreeable man, the Duc de Sully, in the Council of Finances. Subsequently Sully became ungrateful, but this was when, in the interests of his master and the State, he considered that the favourite required too much ; when, moreover, she had made the foolish mistake of giving to her father the post of Captain-General of the Artillery, which Sully considered should belong by rights to himself. Sully bought back the post from d'Estrées, but did not forgive the slight.

Soon, upon all public occasions, such as the reception of foreign Ambassadors, Gabrielle d'Estrées was to be seen by the King's side, while all public functionaries, or Governors of cities or provinces, were, by Henri's direct instructions, ordered to pay their court to her as to himself.

The want of arrogance, and decency of manner, with which Gabrielle received all the honours thrust upon her commended her to the favourable notice of many who, such as the faithful Huguenot watch-dog d'Aubigné, found it impossible to love her. For they found it difficult to hate this woman, always smiling, courteous, and agreeable, with the result that d'Aubigné is found himself commenting upon the modesty of one who occupied the position of Queen. D'Aubigné speaks of "her extreme beauty," while remarking that "it contained nothing that was lascivious."

After the birth of her elder son Henri IV. commenced to display a liking for his home, for a family life. Also, according to the historian Matthieu, he confided to Gabrielle all the counsels that he received, and took her advice, and found in her one who was able to heal all the troubles by which he was so constantly beset. Again, that thoughtful critic Sainte-Beuve remarks that she was one of those women who refresh and repose the minds of those who love them, but not of the kind who stir up or who keep open quarrels. This was the faculty which imparted to Gabrielle that charm which enabled her to carry off with decency and distinction the doubtful position into which she had been thrown.

Whatever may have been her antecedents from youth upwards, whatever may have been her indiscretions for a time with Bellegarde, the man whom she loved, from the time of his marriage her moral bearing was without a shadow of reproach.

Had it so happened that Henri IV. had been able, in time, to succeed in his project of obtaining a divorce and marrying her, Gabrielle would by no means, from a moral point of view, have proved a detriment to Henri as his consort. She would certainly not have disgraced the throne as did Marie de Médicis, the woman who was called upon to occupy it. As a political union, however, in view both of her past and of the rank from which she had been raised, all of the King's courtiers and friends, no matter to what religion they belonged, considered that such a marriage would prove a grievous error.

By the King's most faithful advisers this marriage, upon which Henri more and more set his heart, was

dreaded, for they considered that it would tend to the King's unpopularity, and very greatly to shake his seat upon that throne upon which he was as yet hardly settled.

While the charm of Gabrielle was recognised, and her society sought by such excellent and virtuous women as Catherine de Bourbon, the King's sister, and Coligny's daughter, first the widow of Téligny, then of William the Silent of Orange, her honours went on increasing. Upon the birth of each successive child some fresh mark was shown of the King's attachment.

She was created Duchesse de Beaufort when, in 1596, her daughter Catherine-Henriette was born; this daughter was publicly baptized, with all the ceremony of a King's daughter, and her birth likewise made legal.

The state maintained by Gabrielle was meanwhile Royal, and, in consequence, great was the grumbling of the people of the frequently plague-stricken and constantly poverty-ridden land of France. Her new dresses, new jewels, were the causes for murmurings; the honest women of the country did not, moreover, spare "the courtesan" who revelled in such luxury, as the price of her shame, while they were compelled to forego even the necessaries of life.

Thus it has come to pass that Gabrielle has become more popular in the France of later date than in the France of which she formed, for a moment, one of the brightest stars.

Lestoille, distinctly on the side of the people, who considered themselves defrauded by each new gift to the favourite, can neither help detailing these to her disadvantage nor having an occasional sly cut at the rustic, extra-soldierly bearing of the Béarnais, by whose

want of refinement, whose too frequent camp-stories, he is annoyed. Sully, like Lestoille, was never quite reconciled to the want of culture, the absence of all approaching to *les convenances* in his master. In nothing was this bearing of what Sully calls the *cheval-léger* in Henri IV. more remarkable than in his habit of constantly kissing Gabrielle, and permitting himself all kinds of familiarities with her in public. It may have been that this soldier-King imagined that by openly indulging in these cavalier manners he impressed those who witnessed them with his estimate of the worth of his mistress—it may have been that he merely sought to please himself; but, whether or no, both Lestoille and Sully have plainly shown that they were not pleasing to all.

A description of what occurred at the baptism of an infant cousin of Gabrielle will serve as an illustration.

The child baptized was that of Madame de Sourdis, and the ceremony took place at Paris, the King and Gabrielle acting as godfather and godmother.

The latter was on that day attired in a robe of black satin so loaded with pearls and stones that she could scarcely hold herself up, while the King, who wore one of his favourite costumes of grey, "from the time that he entered the church until he left it never ceased laughing with Madame de Liancourt, and caressing her sometimes in one manner sometimes in another. When she had to lift the child to the font she cried out: "*Mon Dieu!* how fat he is! I shall let him drop, he is so heavy!" "*Ventre-saint-gris!*" replied the King, "don't fear, he will take care not to fall; he is too well bridled and saddled." And a lady who was there present took advantage of the King's good humour to

"chaff (*gosser*) the King in her turn"; but the badinage of the King and this lady in the church was of such a nature as to be impossible of reproduction.

At the same time, Lestoille mentions having seen a handkerchief which had been embroidered for Gabrielle, the cost of which article was nineteen hundred crowns—for cash. While Henri liked to display himself in grey, Gabrielle was equally fond of green. On one occasion we hear of her riding, like a man, hand-in-hand with the King, and attired entirely in green; upon another, again in green satin, with buttonholes embroidered in silver, the cost of her hat, of taffetas of the colour of red velvet, being two hundred crowns. While Gabrielle d'Estrées was able to disport herself in such fine raiment, and to carry handkerchiefs of the value of nineteen hundred crowns, the King was frequently to be found with scarcely a handkerchief to his name.

He had, upon succeeding Henri III., made a despicable *mignon*, named the Chevalier d'O, his Treasurer. One day, upon his complaining to d'O, the latter replied: "Sire, there is no money." "My condition is most miserable," retorted Henri, "you will soon make me go barefoot." Turning to his valet, he inquired: "How many shirts have I got?" "A dozen, sire; but there are several torn." "And how many handkerchiefs? is it not eight that I have left?" asked the King anxiously. "Just at present," answered the valet, "there are only five."

Here d'O interposed, with the remark that he had ordered linen of the value of six thousand crowns from Holland, on purpose for shirts and handkerchiefs.

"That's all very fine," said Henri, "but in the meantime you wish me to resemble the scholars who all

have grand fur robes in their native country, but in the meantime starve to death of cold."

The King is likewise found writing to complain bitterly to Sully of his wants at a critical moment. He speaks with energy, and appeals to his old follower's affection to help him out. "I am very close to the enemy, and have scarcely a horse fit to mount or a suit of armour that is complete to put on my back. My shirts are all torn to rags, my *pourpoints* all out at elbows, my saucepan usually upside down, and for the last two days I have been dining and supping with first one and then another, my purveyors saying they can no longer supply my table, as they have received no money for the last six months, and longer.

"Now do you think that I deserve to be treated like this, and do you think that I should any longer allow the financiers and treasurers to starve me to death, while their own tables are loaded with every delicacy?"

This letter was written in 1596, but Gabrielle had at that time no cause for complaint. She was in that year created Duchesse de Beaufort, the estates of the Duchy had been bought for her by the King, and she was, as usual, living on the fat of the land.

While there are so many letters in existence from the hand of Henri de Navarre, by which we are able to judge of his real thoughts and nature, there are, unfortunately, only two written by Gabrielle—one of which is a mere letter of condolence written in exaggerated style. Over these there has been much polemical discussion, those who seek to make her out a woman of but little intelligence using them as their weapons. In this discussion, upon such insufficient data, we think it, however, wiser not to become involved.

At length there came a day when Henri had made up his mind no longer to delay, but to make every effort to get rid of his wife and marry his mistress. At the same time he resolved to unbosom himself to Sully on the subject of this latter design. He did so on the first occasion, which was shortly before the birth of Gabrielle's third child, Alexandre, called the Chevalier de Vendôme, who first saw the light at Nantes in April 1598, and was legitimised the following year.

Sully allowed the King to talk to him for a long time in general terms about its being necessary for him to be married, while pretending not to see what he was driving at. Resorting to badinage, Sully asked his master at length, playfully, why he did not cause all the pretty girls of the Kingdom to be assembled before him, become a French Ahasuerus, and select the prettiest Esther of the lot.

The King laughed, but told Sully not to "play the beast." "Cunning beast that you are," he remarked; "you understand me perfectly well, but insist upon making me speak out, and say that some day it might come into my head to marry my mistress."

The great Minister was not, however, to be caught on this occasion. He referred the whole matter to merely general terms of hypothesis, while demonstrating how extremely awkward it might be should children born of a mistress who had become a wife contest the claims of those born before she had been married.

Then the wily Sully managed to close the discussion for the time being, after obtaining the King's promise, which was for that matter given voluntarily, not to mention what had been said between them to Gabrielle. Henri himself remarked, upon this occasion, that it might

be as well not to do so, as his mistress had some doubts in her mind as to whether Sully did not consider the good of the State and the glory of the King before the happiness of the King, his mistress, and his children. The King and his Minister parted on the verge of a quarrel, which broke out in earnest, although it was not between Henri and Sully, after the baptism of the boy Alexandre, which event took place at Saint-Germain in June 1598. The quarrel began upon the subject of this baptism, which was, according to the Minister, carried out far too much on the scale accorded to a Royal infant, lawfully begotten.

The King agreed with his Minister, but said that he was not responsible in the matter, as his orders had been exceeded. This gave Sully his chance to complain of those about the Duchesse de Beaufort, whom, he said, forced the King's hand in various unbecoming ways. Again the King found himself upon the side of his Minister, as he did not like having his rights interfered with by any means or anybody.

The Duc de Sully found his own authority supported by letters which had recently come from Marguerite, who had been requested to agree amiably to a divorce. The Queen of Navarre, had previously, from mere diplomacy, behaved in a most amiable manner towards Gabrielle. Marguerite had even written, in the previous year, when she had been despoiled, for her benefit, of her Duchy d'Étampes, consenting to this forced gift to "that honest lady," since she was beloved by the King.

Now, however, she firmly declined to remove herself from her lawful place upon the throne "to yield it to a woman of such base extraction, who had led such a dirty and ugly life as was she who was talked of."

Quoting this letter, Sully pointed out to the King

that M. de Fresne and Madame de Sourdis, Gabrielle's advisers, had greatly overstepped the mark, and that, if he would gain his ends, he would have to make use of both discretion and patience. Hereupon the King became angry with M. de Fresne and Madame de Sourdis, declaring that anything that the Duchesse might fail in was entirely of their doing.

Sully felt now that he stood on firm ground and waited for an opportunity of jumping upon those advisers of the Duchesse of Beaufort whose ill deeds he had exposed to the King. He had not long to wait. Being at the head of the Finances, a paper came to him, made out by M. de Fresne, for payment of the heralds, trumpets, hautbois, and other officials at the baptism of "Alexandre Monsieur," who was designated by the Royal title of *Enfant de France.*

It was this title of "Child of France" to which Gabrielle and her advisers attached the chief importance; they did not in the least care about the amount of the total asked for. Now, what did the cunning Sully do? He kept the paper, made out a new one for a less amount, and, without any comment, sent it on to the Treasurer for payment. The expected protest came at once: "Monsieur! the amount to be paid for the baptism of Children of France is settled from of old."

Sully had merely altered the amount in order to avoid the use of the Royal title. He now replied, testily, to M. de Fresne and others, complaining on behalf of the Duchesse: "Oh! get along! there are not any *enfants de France.*"

Before the angry complainants could reach Gabrielle to tell her of this insult, Sully hurried off himself to the King. He complained of the foolish ambition which

sought to multiply its titles, and to snatch from the King compromising favours which resembled promises. The Béarnais at once flew into a rage at the idea of being imposed upon, and sent Sully off to have the matter out with the Duchesse.

Now it was that the battle-royal began. Gabrielle insulted Sully, who ordered his carriage and returned to the King. The Béarnais repaired in turn, with Sully, to the Convent of Saint-Germain, and, upon being received at the door by Gabrielle, neither kissed her nor complimented her according to his custom.

In the quarrel which ensued Henri spoke roughly, while Gabrielle repeatedly called Sully "a valet" and a mere "servitor." Becoming angered at length, Henri IV. replied, in a rage, that "he would rather do without ten mistresses like her than without one servant like Sully." We can imagine the triumph of Sully, but Gabrielle was dumbfounded.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Terrible Death of Gabrielle

April 1599

ALTHOUGH the Queen of Navarre had been left in peace for a number of years in her fortress of Usson, her existence had not been entirely forgotten.

Before the end of the year 1592 that most excellent diplomatist and straightforward counsellor, Du Plessis-Mornay, had ventured to reproach and reason with the King on his debauched mode of life. Not content with his affair with Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henri de Navarre had become the father of two daughters by a lady named Charlotte des Essards, he had indulged in an intrigue with the Abbesse de Montmartre, while a woman called Armandine and a doctor's daughter named Martine Montaigu had been among his other victims. Du Plessis-Mornay—honest Protestant that he was—at last risked the King's displeasure, and, taking his master severely to task, pointed out to him that he was risking his soul, his body, and his reputation in such wicked and frivolous pursuits.

"Why do you not think of marrying me, then?" was the reply of the King, given with an air of bravado.

"Marry you! Well, we shall have to unmarry you first," replied Du Plessis; but I certainly think that it

would be the best thing, both for you and for the State; and, with your leave, Sire, I will set about the matter without delay."

Mornay was as good as his word. In the beginning of 1593 he placed himself in communication with a certain M. Érard, the Master of Requests of the Queen of Navarre. This official he sent off to Usson, to demand the consent of that Princess to the annullation of her marriage. Mornay asked her at first merely for a paper called a procuration, giving the promise to declare in due course before the proper authorities that she had never given her consent to her marriage, which had been contracted with a Protestant without the Pope's dispensation (although this had been subsequently granted), that it had also been contracted within the degrees of affinity forbidden by the Church, and to say that she wished this marriage to be declared null and void, in order to relieve her conscience of its remorse.

The Minister was in hopes that, with such a paper, a divorce might be arranged for his master without reference to the Pope being necessary, and that the ecclesiastical and secular tribunals of France would be competent to settle the matter.

Although Marguerite de Valois had not the slightest wish to remain the wife of Henri de Navarre, she could not make up her mind all at once. She kept M. Érard at Usson from April to July 1593 before sending back a very submissive letter to the King with the "procuration" which had been asked for. She was commencing to wish for liberty to return to Paris, or, at all events, no longer to be compelled to defend herself at Usson. Accordingly she followed the line of being willing to do that which was for the good of the State by enabling

her husband to marry again and have legitimate heirs to the Crown. To Du Plessis she wrote a most friendly and flattering letter, asking him for his good services with his master, especially in the matter of the payment of her pensions and her debts—concerning which vague offers had been made to her by Érard.

This submissive action brought back a reply from Henri IV. offering his wife two hundred and fifty thousand crowns for her debts and a yearly pension of twelve thousand. Marguerite replied, bargaining for two thousand more crowns yearly, and, as a permanent place of surety for herself, for Usson.

There was a good deal of delay before Usson was yielded up ; but, by sticking to her point, Marguerite at length was left with the fortress in her own hands absolutely.

The League was as yet only scotched, not killed, and the head Leaguers now sent to Marguerite an accredited envoy to seek to renew their old alliance, while warning the Queen not to trust herself in any way before any of the King's tribunals. She, however, declined to listen to the League, and continued to correspond with Mornay on friendly terms, through Érard, who paid her a second visit with a new procuration to sign, a little different from the former one.

All was going well for the negotiations in 1594 when, unfortunately, the promised pensions were left unpaid. Marguerite then wrote to the King to complain, and he replied, making the excuse that times were very hard and no money was procurable. Another cause of complaint on the part of Marguerite was that her Abbey of Saint-Corneille at Compiègne was given by him to his mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées. This matter was, however, arranged, as, while the wily Marguerite wrote in a friendly manner

concerning Gabrielle, whom she said she was "resolved to honour and love," she demanded the King's ratification of the appointment she had already made, without reference to him, of her Chancellor Bertier to the diocese of Condom. To this her husband had perforce to agree, but matters dragged and the King did not keep his promises about other payments, again giving away territories which had been appointed to his wife for her satisfaction. Thus years passed by until the year 1598, when, as we have mentioned, Marguerite declined to yield up her place to Gabrielle d'Estrées. In this resolve she was secretly applauded by Du Plessis-Mornay as much as by Sully, and the former, in consequence, endeavoured to put on the break to the wheels of the long-drawn-out negotiations instead of aiding the carriage up the hill.

The original procurations were accordingly declared by him to be out of date, and a new one had to be sent, which Marguerite took ample time before signing. At length, in February 1599, the Queen of France and Navarre affixed her signature to this last-sent paper; but the Pope now had to be considered in the matter. Clement VIII., although he had received messages on messages from the impatient Henri IV., had with pleasure taken advantage of all the delays caused by Marguerite. He did not wish to allow the King of France to marry his mistress, and therefore he either refused or wilfully delayed issuing any dispensation whatever to facilitate a divorce. Henri commenced to send threatening messages by his envoys, Cardinal d'Ossat and Sillery, saying that he would cause a divorce, on the grounds of the Queen's adultery, to be pronounced against her by the Archbishop of Paris, or by the Grand Almoner.

To these threats, however, Clement VIII. turned a deaf ear; and then the unexpected happened. Gabrielle d'Estrées died in Paris, after having been at the house of Zamet, the Moorish financier, on April 10th, 1599. She, during her agonies, gave birth to a still-born child, but the unhappy woman died in almost unheard-of pain, with horrible contortions, as the result of poison. This was probably administered by Zamet himself, in the interests of the Florentine Grand-Ducal House of Medici, from which it was sought to supply the King with a wife, with money and no past. When we say that Gabrielle was done away with in the interests of Florence it would perhaps be wise to explain that there were two parties in France, one of which was in favour of Gabrielle, the other violently opposed to the idea of the King marrying her, and anxious to arrange an Italian match for him, by which he could secure a large supply of that money of which he stood so greatly in need. Zamet, the Moor, had come to France from Italy; he was always in close financial touch with the ambitious Grand-Duke of Tuscany, and undoubtedly belonged to this latter party. He was a merry fellow, and the boon companion of Henri IV., who frequently indulged in gambling parties in the Italian palazzo which the Moor had constructed in Paris. When the King lost, the Moor did not press for payment, and even lent the needy monarch money wherewith to continue playing against himself or others, such as that flashy noble, de Bassompierre. A man named Fouquet la Varenne was another courtier of suspicious character, in favour of the Italian marriage and in close union with Zamet.

From the kitchen of his sister, Catherine de Bourbon,

Henri had taken this able but worthless man, making him the agent and go-between in his amours, to which low employment the unscrupulous La Varenne lent himself, greatly to his own advantage. As he was promoted from the kitchen of the Princess to the cabinet of the King, this Fouquet became devout, posed as the protector of the Jesuits, and amassed great riches.

These Jesuits had insisted upon Henri separating from his mistress for a week at the time of the Easter Communion in 1599, René Benoit, the King's Confessor, having declared that the King could not receive the Sacrament while being in open sin.

Seeing the justice of this, Henri sent Gabrielle back from Fontainebleau to Paris. He accompanied his mistress half-way, to Melun, where she took boat down the Seine to Paris. The parting between the pair was most affecting. It seemed to them both as if some misfortune hung over their heads. Gabrielle was in tears, the King apparently heart-broken.

Sully, whose sympathies were by no means with Gabrielle, describes this affecting parting almost in a tone of satisfaction.

"In separating there took place between them as many compliments, mysteries, and ceremonies as if they had well known that they would never see one another again; even she, in parting, with tears in her eyes, recommending to his care her César, her Alexandre, and Henriette, her buildings at Monceaux, and her poor servants. This so affected the King that he could scarcely tear himself from her arms. It became even necessary for the Maréchal d'Ornano, and Messieurs de Roquelaure and Frontenac to come and separate them, and take him back to Fontainebleau."

La Varenne accompanied Gabrielle to Paris, nominally to protect her. He took her to Zamet's palace, where she was visited by, that false Princess and false friend, Louise Marguerite de Lorraine, commonly known as Mademoiselle de Guise.

Sully also paid a *visite de cérémonie* to the poor woman, whose heart was oppressed and eyes heavy from weeping. Gabrielle made then a last effort to regain Sully's good graces, exerting herself to the utmost to cajole and flatter the all-powerful Minister. He, however, held himself coldly on his guard, and when asked for his confidence merely replied with "many civilities, submissions, and thanks." His wife and he were about to leave Paris for Easter, and the Duc sent his wife accordingly, who was as narrow-minded as himself, to take leave of the Duchesse de Beaufort.

In their interview Gabrielle contrived awkwardly to hurt the susceptibilities of this vain woman. Speaking as if she were about to become Queen, and thinking to flatter the Duchesse de Sully, Gabrielle informed her that she "would always be pleased to see her at her '*levers* and her *couchers*.'" Sully's wife retired inwardly raging, and rejoined her husband to go off to Rosny, while waiting, according to Sully, "until the cord should break."

After a particularly *recherché* dinner served to Gabrielle by Zamet on the following day, Gabrielle went to Mass, accompanied by Mademoiselle de Guise. She returned before the end of the service to Zamet's house, feeling ill, and had to be carried to her bed senseless. The most agonising crises followed this fainting fit, convulsions and contortions succeeding each other in rapid succession.

Determined to leave Zamet's house at all costs, in

a lucid interval the miserable Gabrielle insisted upon La Varenne removing her to the lodging of her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, who was absent. She was never, however, allowed to see the King, to whom she contrived to send a note. The scoundrelly La Varenne wrote stating falsely to Henri that she was dead, while she was still alive, and therefore the King did not come.

By this means the fellow-poisoner of Zamet prevented Henri from learning from her own lips what she knew and would tell him ; averted also, in this manner, his probable vengeance. The excuse which he gave afterwards for his conduct was that the unfortunate Gabrielle was so terribly changed in appearance that he feared lest the King, having seen her, should " be disgusted with her for ever after, in case she should ever recover ! "

La Varenne, at the same time, took care that the doctors should give her no proper remedies. In his letter to Henri he said that, on account of her condition of being enceinte, the physicians were unable to administer the necessary medicines. Thus it happened that this unhappy woman, who had been so great and who was considered so near a throne that her Royal robes had been already made, died miserably, alone and apparently deserted, after more than forty-eight hours of the most intense agony, during which no efforts were even made to save her life.

It was in the arms of the traitor, La Varenne, that her tortures ended on April 10th, 1599. No priest even had been brought to her bedside to offer her the last consolations of religion, while, such had been the result of her paroxysms, that, according to Lestoille and others, " her mouth was twisted right round to the back of her

neck, and she became so hideous that one could scarcely look upon her ! "

And yet, strange to say, there are still to be found writers who calmly state that it is a mistake to ascribe the death of Gabrielle to poison, that it was merely the result of a *fausse-couche* !

From the first the greatest pains were taken to represent the death of Gabrielle as due to natural causes, but none believed this. Although Henri IV. was thunderstruck, and apparently almost heart-broken, upon the news of the death of his dear mistress, no inquiry was ever instituted into the cause of her decease. This fact may, perhaps, have been the result of the advice of Sully to the King, to let sleeping dogs lie, and not to probe too deeply into the mystery, lest he should discover more than he wished to know concerning those who were at the bottom of it.

A messenger had been sent by the King instantly to summon Sully from Rosny. This man, who was the same who had been sent by La Varenne to Henri, arrived before Sully and his wife had had their breakfast. How delighted they were ! The messenger was well entertained, while the Duc, running off to his wife in her bed, embraced her gleefully and exclaimed, " My girl, plenty of news ! You will not have to go to the *lever* or the *coucher* of the Duchesse, for the cord has broken. But, since she is really dead, may God give her a good life and a long one ! "

Henri IV. went into black mourning for a week, then into violet mourning for three months. The Parliament of Paris and the foreign Ambassadors tendered their condolences to the King upon the loss of his mistress. His sister Catherine—now become Duchesse de Bar—wrote

him also a most affectionate letter, offering to act in the light of mother to her nephews and niece, the children of Gabrielle. To this letter Henri replied, "The root of my love is dead ; never will it spring again ! "

Within a month or two this most wonderful root of love had nevertheless sprung again stronger than ever ! Indeed, according to both Bassompierre and the Princesse de Conti, it was only three weeks after the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées when it had grown into a vigorous tree, in whose shadow reposed the petulant figure of Henriette d'Entragues. Sully, after quoting a few psalms to his master, lost but little time in pointing out to him that he should take advantage of the kindness vouchsafed to him by Providence in helping him out of a bad situation. Now, said the matter-of-fact Minister of Finances, no time was to be lost. The King should at once put an end to the uncertainties of the nation by contracting a respectable marriage.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Home-coming of Marguerite

1605

With Gabrielle safely out of the way, and peacefully at rest underground, Sully and Du Plessis-Mornay commenced to hurry up the negotiations with the Queen of Navarre. It was realised, if only she would now lend her own honest aid in severing the bonds which united her to the King of France, that there would be little further difficulty on the side of the Pope.

Sully wrote, therefore, to beg Marguerite to listen to those who could show her the way to obtain true happiness; and to him she responded most cordially. Calling him "My Cousin," Marguerite replied that she desired the happiness of the King and the good of France as much as he did, and that her ardent wish was to see Henri with legitimate heirs to his Crown. She added, "If up till now I have used delays and interposed doubts and difficulties, you, better than any one, know the reason—not wishing to see in my place that disreputable slut." She ended her letter by saying that she would accommodate herself to anything reasonable, and take Sully's advice on the matter.

The procurations she had previously signed amounted to nothing; they had no legal binding whatever, and

there had been nothing to prevent the Queen from changing her mind. Being, indeed, strongly imbued with all the pride of the blood of the Valois, it had been quite on the cards that, rather than see her place on the throne taken by one whom she called a "disreputable slut," Marguerite would have continued constantly to raise fresh difficulties in the way of a divorce. But, as remarks Tallemant des Réaux, "she was very supple, and knew how to accommodate herself to the times." Thus, when Gabrielle had been all-powerful, the Queen of Navarre had paid her her Court, and even acquiesced in her Abbeys and Duchies being given to the mistress who openly spoke in the most slighting manner of her to the King. Beyond a certain length, however, she refused to go. Now times had changed, and Marguerite therefore appointed on her behalf two procurators, to request the King to allow her to sue the Pope and all other ecclesiastical authorities for a declaration of the nullity of their union.

Henri was naturally delighted to see his wife become so pliant. Rome was communicated with at once, and Clement VIII., now no longer obstructive, delegated various Cardinals to act in his name and examine the affair.

The King was at once put under examination upon twenty-two separate heads, after which the Pope's delegates were about to proceed to Usson to examine the Queen of Navarre in turn. This, however, was an ordeal which Marguerite wrote that she felt herself unable to face. While being willing to give all the assistance in her power, she begged humbly to be spared the humiliation of having to give personal evidence. Should she be compelled to be heard in person, by

people who might not be all of the same opinion as herself, she wrote that she feared that she would "become confused with so great a displeasure as to defeat the object in view.

"I know well that I could not stand it, and fear that my tears would cause those Cardinals to think that force had been put upon me, or a constraint which would spoil the effect which the King wished to be produced."

The Queen begged, therefore, that the Archdeacon Bertier, the same to whom she had given the Bishopric of Condom, should be sent to her, to represent the Pope's delegates, and take her evidence on Commission.

Henri IV. was man enough to respect the delicacy felt by his wife in the matter of giving the evidence which was to deprive her of her Crown and right to the title of Queen of France. Bertier was therefore sent to her, to represent the Cardinals, and to him Marguerite made the following statement :

" Never had I the wish for this marriage in my heart. I was forced to it by the King, Charles IX., and the Queen, my mother. I implored them with hot tears, but the King menaced me that, unless I gave my consent, I should be made the most unfortunate creature in the Kingdom. Notwithstanding that I had no affection for the King of Navarre, and said repeatedly that I desired to wed another Prince [Guise], I had to obey."

To this, in order to impress the Cardinals, other remarks were added, commenting upon the unhappy state of conjugal life led between her husband and herself before the time of his flight from the Court in 1575. At this period, which was that during which Henri was carrying on his amour with Madame de Sauve, Marguerite

asserted that she and her husband had not lived *maritalement* together.

The King lost no time in sending the Comte de Beaumont to return his thanks to Marguerite de Valois. "I will not cherish you or love you less," said Henri; "and in all that concerns you I will make you see that I will not be a brother to you in name only, but in fact."

The Comte de Beaumont personally assured the Queen of all the advantages that she would derive from the King for her willing connivance with himself in the matter of obtaining the divorce. The King confirmed to his wife the titles of Queen and Duchesse de Valois; all of her domains were also assured to her and her successors; the King, however, reserved their Sovereignty to himself, with the right of repurchase. In addition, the King soon sent a large sum for the payment of his wife's debts, promised more, and accompanied his gift with a most affectionate letter.

Never, indeed, were husband and wife upon such excellent terms as when they became husband and wife no longer.

In the middle of November 1599 the Cardinals, acting on behalf of the Pope, declared the marriage null and void; a month later the dissolution was declared by them, and on December 22nd this dissolution was registered by the Parliament of Paris and openly announced in the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, in the parish of which the Louvre was situated.

Thus, after a period of twenty-seven years, during which neither husband nor wife had behaved with even common decency, was terminated the ill-fated union which had commenced with all the horrors of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew.

Marguerite, now between forty-six and forty-seven years of age, remained at Usson, and continued to lose her good looks and to grow fat. In no manner, however, did she alter the life that she had been leading, which was a combination of bigotry and debauchery. Among the numerous lovers upon whom the Queen showered her favours during her residence at Usson, the name of one has been retained by all the chroniclers of the Queen of Navarre, on account of her absurd jealousy. This was a handsome young man named Claude François, the son of a master charcoal-burner, who was a chorister in the cathedral of Puy, where he instructed the boy-singers. On account of his beautiful voice Claude François went to Usson to display his accomplishments before the Queen. So lovely did Marguerite find his notes that she commanded him to remain. She gave him an estate called Pominy, by which name he was thenceforth known, and made him her secretary. Fearing lest the charms of the young Pominy might perchance bewitch some of her followers, in the same manner as they had herself, the Queen now, according to Jean Burel, caused all of the beds of her ladies to be placed upon legs so high that, without stooping, she could see if he should happen to be concealed beneath them.

For this talented musician and composer Marguerite was in the habit of composing poems, which he set to music. At last she determined to reward Pominy for his services with a young and noble wife, and Michelette de Fangière, one of her ladies of honour, was selected for the purpose. Unfortunately, before the wedding could take place, Pominy, who had injured his lungs by too much singing, died of pulmonary disease, whereupon

the Queen remained inconsolable. That is to say, she was inconsolable after the fashion of Henri de Navarre, until she found a successor to the unfortunate Pominy. Into the career of this successor, and various others, at Usson, we will not go, for the day had gone by when the last Princess of the Valois honoured merely Princes or great nobles with her regard. She had fallen so low that any page or youthful squire, provided he were but handsome, might with impunity aspire to the good graces of one who was, but in name only, Queen of France and Navarre.

For five years longer Marguerite remained at Usson. During these years her career was merely chequered by occasional disputes with the officials, who failed to remit the money for the payment of her debts, and by law-suits with her illegitimate nephew, Charles de Valois, Comte d'Auvergne, the son of Charles IX. and Marie Touchet.

Both of these matters required constant reference to Sully and to Henri IV., but whereas where the money matters were concerned Marguerite contrived to get her own way, she had far more trouble with the Comte d'Auvergne, in whose favour she had been disinherited by Catherine de Médicis of various strong places, at the instances of her spiteful brother, Henri III.

To go into the quarrels of Marguerite with her insolent nephew, who became Duc d'Angoulême, would take too long. She contrived, however, to assist in the exposure of various plots against the King, in which he was engaged with the rebel Ducs de Biron and de Bouillon. He was the half-brother of the King's new paramour, Henriette d'Entragues, a relative of Marguerite's early lover, Charles de Balzac d'Entragues, or

Bidé, having married Marie Touchet. After undergoing one term of imprisonment in the Bastille, the information supplied by Marguerite to the King was partly the cause of Charles de Valois paying for his treasonable designs against Henri by a further detention of eleven years in that gloomy fortress.

Owing to the good offices rendered to him by his former wife, whose skill and acumen in finding out the plots of conspirators, which she revealed to the King, were remarkable, Henri eventually put no obstructions in her way when she determined to return to Paris. When she did so, at length, in the year 1605, Marguerite was received with the highest honours, not only by Henri IV., but by his new wife, Marie de Médicis, whom he had married in the year succeeding his divorce.

The only action on the part of Henri de Navarre which met with considerable criticism, as showing a considerable want of good taste, was a foolish gasconade. It concerned his selection of the person whom he first sent to greet, and, as his own representative, to do honour to Marguerite as she approached Paris.

As she descended from her coach, at her residence outside Paris, called the Château de Madrid, the gentleman who was there waiting to offer her his hand to alight was no other than one who had formerly been far too much to the Queen of Navarre. Bowing low before her, with all ceremonious greeting, Marguerite beheld her once adored lover, Harlay de Champvallon. After having held a very high post in the army of the League, when the League was reduced Henri IV. had taken his wife's former favourite into his service, treated him with high honours, and created him a Knight of his own Order. With a touch of his old malice, he had imagined that it would

be a capital joke to send Champvallon to welcome his former Royal mistress back to Paris, where it was now over twenty years since she had become the mother of his son.

Marguerite, if she felt that a jocular insult had been intended, was far too wise to appear to notice it, especially as Henri's son by Gabrielle, the young Duc de Vendôme, accompanied by various other great nobles, was waiting behind Champvallon to do her honour. There were likewise various officers of the household of Queen Marie de Médicis in attendance, to convey the congratulations of the Queen that was to the Queen that had been upon the occasion of her return.

The King himself had sent word that he hoped to wait very shortly in person upon the Queen Marguerite, and he arrived at Madrid punctually upon July 26th, 1605. Then, for the space of three hours, the former married couple remained in close and intimate conversation. How much they must have had to talk over together that did not in the least concern the recent rebellion in Auvergne, of which Marguerite had given warning !

We are assured that the King particularly begged two things of his former wife. These were that, for her health's sake, she would not sit up so late as formerly; while, for the good of her pocket, she should restrain herself from her accustomed liberalities. The Queen laughed and said that she would do her best, but that generosity was in the blood of the Valois. A day or two later the little Dauphin was sent to visit Marguerite, and in the middle of August she was received in great state by Marie de Médicis and the King at the Louvre.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Henri and Henriette

1599—1601

When Charles IX. died in the year 1574, at the early age of twenty-four, he left behind him two women whom he had treated very differently, to mourn his loss. The first of these was his Queen, Elizabeth of Austria, said to have been one of the best women in the world. This Princess had no children, and died at the Monastery of Saint-Claire, in Vienna, eighteen years later, without marrying again, although Philip II. had sought her for his fifth wife.

The second was his mistress, Marie Touchet, a woman whom Charles had dearly loved. She was the daughter of one of his Councillors named Jean Touchet, and by her Charles IX. had two sons, the elder of whom died young, while the latter lived to become a thorn in the side of Henri IV., first as Comte d'Auvergne and then Comte de Poitiers and Duc d'Angoulême.

Marie Touchet is supposed to have been introduced to her Royal lover by François de Balzac, Seigneur d'Entragues, de Marcoussi, and of the Forest of Malesherbes. He was a Councillor of State, a captain of fifty of the King's men-at-arms, Governor of Orléans, and a Knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Thus

the highest Order in the Kingdom of France had been founded by Henri III. in honour of his sister Marguerite, before Du Guast had succeeded in alienating him from his sister, and the colours of the Order were those borne by the Queen of Navarre.

The Marquis d'Entragues, who, in addition to his above-mentioned honours, was also the Lieutenant-Général de l'Orléanais, was, as has been seen, a very great noble indeed. He did not, however, consider himself disgraced by taking as his wife one who was the daughter of an illegitimate mother, in the person of Marie Touchet, the ex-mistress of Charles IX. She was his second wife, his first spouse having belonged to the ancient family of Rohan, and by Marie he had two daughters. The elder of these was Henriette de Balzac, or d'Entragues, who was fated to become the mistress of Henri IV. The second was Marie de Balzac, who became openly and scandalously the mistress of that gambling boon companion of the Béarnais, the Maréchal de Bassompierre.

The fact that both of her daughters should have departed from the paths of prudence does not seem to have been the fault of Marie Touchet, since the seduction of each of them was accomplished by means of a promise of marriage. However, in the case of Henriette, the elder, this promise was merely an afterthought, on the part of the girl herself and her father, when a large sum had already been agreed upon as the price of her innocence. Marie Touchet, once she had become Marquise d'Entragues, had developed very strict views on the subject of morality ; so strict, indeed, that she did not flinch from murder—which, of course, went unpunished. When she found that a page was indulging in a little familiarity with one

of the girls the virtuous mistress of Charles IX. took a dagger and stabbed the unfortunate youth to the heart.

This murder does not seem in the least to have affected the reputation of Marie Touchet; on the contrary, it enhanced it. She is spoken of as having been a lady of a most refined nature and of literary tastes, her favourite author being Plutarch. She was very ambitious, although of Flemish origin, and not herself noble, on account of being the mother of the boy who, although he had been legitimatised, was commonly known as the Bastard of Valois. Accordingly, her views were very high for both her daughters, but the "incomparable Marie" died too soon to see how utterly her views had miscarried.

Of Henriette, the elder daughter of François de Balzac, it is said that she was "a living flame, bold, with a keen tongue, with ready replies which would put all the doctors to shame." Not given to the study of history, she was cunning and disputatious, theology being her favourite subject. She was subtle and dangerous, lightly built in frame and light in her manners and conversation. Lively and pretty she was, but in every respect a complete contrast, whether in bearing or conversation, to the easy, good-natured, handsome, and latterly somewhat stout Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Always ready with her tongue, mocking and laughter-loving, her sole efforts seemed to be devoted to making fun of others in an attractive but malicious manner. She spared none, least of all the middle-aged Henri de Navarre, King of France, when he had been foolish enough to surrender himself completely into her thrall.

Henriette d'Entragues may be described as a woman who was already *blasée* before she had lived; she was absolutely wanting in refinement, delighted in telling and

listening to stories which would have made many a courtier blush, and one who, by her very *abandon*, which was *piquant* and amusing, was calculated to appeal to the worst instincts in man. She likewise set a high price upon her own charms, and, having all the instincts of the courtesan, had fully determined not to surrender them without a very large payment in cash.

To the society of this adorable creature Henri IV. was introduced by his pander La Varenne, a month or two after the death of the Gabrielle with whom he had declared that his heart had descended into the tomb. She had already been lauded to the King as being one full of *beautés*, *gentil. esprit*, *cajoleries*, *et bons mots*, until, although he had previously had a bad opinion of the Entragues family, his curiosity had become aroused. He saw her, saw her again, and, his own gross nature being amused with her loose and clever way of talking, his senses became engaged. It was more owing to the tongue of her whom Sully calls *ce bec affilé*, than to her looks that Henri, greatly to the disgust of his grave Minister, declared that he must make his, at no matter what cost, this cunning woman who, already at the age of twenty, had the worm of rottenness and corruption eating into her vitals.

Sully, in his *Mémoires*, shows how he hated Henriette from the first. He calls her a *baquenaut* on various occasions, on others says she is "a minx, a vicious wasp, a shrew, an impertinent woman, and a cunning female." And surely, if ever man were placed in a position to judge of her proper character it was the Lord of Rosny, years of whose life were devoted to attempting to patch up the quarrels in which she involved the foolish King. For underneath her velvet paws Henriette, tiger-cat that

she was, had claws of iron ; and well she showed that she knew how to use them to rend the man who became her slave, even, in the end, to the extent, in combination with Queen Marie de Médicis, of procuring his assassination.

No sooner had Henri IV. seen Henriette d'Entragues a time or two than he realised that here was no young lady who was ready, as so many before her, to fall into his arms for love of himself, admiration of his exalted rank and glorious reputation, but that, although prepared to yield to his desires, it would be on a strictly cash basis. He accordingly commenced negotiations at once, both with the charming *ingénue* herself and with her estimable father, to whom Henriette referred the King.

In the very first letter from Henri to Mademoiselle d'Entragues we find him writing : "*Mes chères Amours*," —this, by the way, is a very usual mode for Henri de Navarre to employ in commencing his letters to women. "*Mes chères Amours*, La Varenne and the lackey arrived together. You command me to overcome all the difficulties thrown in the way of our contentment. By the propositions that I have made, I have shown sufficiently the force of my love ; it is from your side that there is more difficulty. What I have said in your presence, that will I do without fail—but nothing more. I shall have great pleasure in seeing Monsieur d'Entragues, and will hardly leave him any rest until our business is either made or marred." This letter is ended affectionately enough, in all conscience, for a first epistle: "Good-night, heart of mine. I kiss you a million times."

The bargain had already been made before October 1st, 1599, that Henri was to pay the sum of one hundred thousand golden crowns as the price of the favours of

Mademoiselle d'Entragues, when Henri's impatience for the fulfilment by her of her side of the bargain received a check. For it was intimated to him that, in addition to the money, a title and an estate would be required, and, likewise, a promise of marriage, to be fulfilled should certain events occur.

Sully was already making arrangements to marry Henri to the Princess Marie de Médicis, whose money the Minister very greatly desired for the purpose of carrying out a very necessary war with Savoy. The promised sum of six hundred thousand crowns of dowry he was calculating upon handling in advance, and feeling very thankful to think that his new artillery would be paid for, when the King marched into his apartment, at Fontainebleau, with a paper in his hand. This, in rather a shamefaced way, he handed to Sully to read, while asking his Minister's advice.

Sully winced when he perused the document, which he found to be a promise to marry Henriette d'Entragues. He hummed and hawed, turned the paper over, said it was an important matter, and would need consideration.

"But," exclaimed the impatient Henri, "your advice! your real advice."

"May I give it, Sire, and will you not be angry?"

"Give it, by all means, otherwise—*Ventre saint-gris!* why do you think I ask for it?"

"This, then, is my advice!" And then the intrepid Minister tore the paper across, and across again.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed the King angrily.

"Sire, I am a madman and an idiot, but I only wish that I could be so much of a crazy being as to be the only madman in France!"

The Minister had much more to say, notably to

remind his master of the fact that Queen Marguerite had refused to resign her rights in favour of a woman like Gabrielle d'Estrées, and would most certainly prove equally obstinate where an Henriette d'Entragues was concerned. Nor, he added, would the Pope consent to assist such an union by granting a divorce.

Without arguing the matter, Henri went down to his cabinet. There he called for his secretary, wrote out a new promise of marriage, and rode off with it to the Château de Malesherbes, on pretence of going upon a hunting expedition in that direction. He stayed away two whole days ; and from that time must be dated the commencement of that ill-fated liaison between Henri de Navarre and the daughter of Marie Touchet. Upon his return the King caused a patent of nobility to be made out for his new mistress, under the title of Marquise de Verneuil.

Sully took his revenge upon the King by bringing him the sum of one hundred thousand crowns all in silver pieces. With a malicious pleasure, the Minister caused this immense amount of coin to be spread out and counted upon the floor of the King's cabinet.

When Henri saw the carpet entirely covered with little piles of silver he looked wistfully at the money and made a grimace.

" *Ventre saint-gris !* " he exclaimed, " that's a pleasure dearly paid for."

" Yes," replied Sully drily, " the merchandise is certainly a bit dear."

It was, however, the promise of marriage which Henri IV. was to find the dearest part of the bargain, for during the rest of his life Henriette d'Entragues noisily claimed, owing to its existence, that she, and not Marie

de Médicis, should be considered as the King's lawful wife, claimed also for her children equal rights with those of the Florentine Princess. Indeed she did more, she asserted the right of her son to be called Dauphin of France and intrigued with Spain, which insolently recognised the claim of the mistress, while declaring that the Queen's children were but bastards.

A month later the decree was received pronouncing the cancellation of the King's marriage with Marguerite de Valois, whereupon Sully was not to be put off from his determination to carry out the Italian match in spite of the King's promises to Henriette. By the terms of the promise which Henri had signed, while the Marquis d'Entragues consented, in consideration of the payment of one hundred thousand crowns, to hand over his daughter to be "the King's companion," this latter promised that "should Henriette within six months after date become enceinte and bear a son" he would make her his Queen.

Sully, who had no intention of waiting to see what might or might not happen, came one day to see the King about some matters of State. As he was leaving, apparently as an after-thought, he remarked casually, "By the way, Sire, we have just been marrying you." Thereupon the King "remained for half a quarter of an hour dreaming, scratching his head, cleaning his nails, but saying nothing." At length he woke up, slapped one hand upon another, and exclaimed that if Sully declared that, for the good of the Kingdom, he had got to be married he supposed that he would have to agree to it. But he added that he very much feared to be linked to a woman with an obstinate nature, one who would fill his life with domestic troubles.

Henri could not get out of the engagements entered into on his behalf for this political match, for the reason that the necessity of a war with the Duke of Savoy had become more than ever apparent, and the dowry of Marie de Médicis was urgently required before military operations could be commenced. The Grand-Duke of Tuscany sent the money without any delay, whereupon Sully, who was anxious to inaugurate by a campaign his new appointment as Grand-Master of the Artillery, pushed forward the preparations for the invasion of Savoy, and the attack on the mountain fortresses of that Duchy.

Nevertheless, during that year 1600, while making ready to proceed upon this new campaign at the head of his army, Henri constantly found himself being torn in different directions. His honour and ambition alike urged him to go and punish Charles Emanuel of Savoy for his repeated breaches of faith in retaining the Marquisate of Saluzzo, which belonged to France—necessity pushed him to a marriage in which his heart was not in the slightest degree concerned, and he felt, at the same time, the importance of disarming Henriette by taking back from her the promise that he had given.

There was all the more necessity for this since the King's mistress had become enceinte within the stipulated time of six months. Should she continue to hold that paper and bear a son, how could the King avoid marrying her ?

The position was awkward, certainly, but, while Henriette and her father distinctly declined to restore the binding document which they held, Henri contrived, for the time being, to dry the tears of his mistress by promising that he would cause her to marry a Prince of the Blood, the Duc de Nevers. At the same time,

he sent off all kinds of messages to Marie de Médicis by the Seigneur de Frontenac, and likewise himself wrote many love-letters, couched in ardent strain, to the Florentine Princess. His conduct throughout this period was stamped with extreme duplicity. For instance, although upon October 19th, 1600, Henri was informed that his marriage by proxy had taken place in Florence, upon that same date he wrote to Henriette, appointing to her an accredited messenger whom she could send off to Rome with the necessary documents to invalidate the Tuscan marriage, on the grounds of his previous engagement. At the same time, however, Henri IV. took measures to ensure the interception of this messenger, so that he should never be able to proceed to Rome.

The war in Savoy was a most brilliantly conducted affair, and crowned with the greatest success, in spite of the treachery to the King of the Duc de Biron, son of the old Maréchal de Biron, who was in secret league with Charles Emanuel. Henri was crowned with laurels, and Sully also, who had done wonders with his artillery in the mountainous country.

Leaving the seat of war, to which he had proceeded in June 1600, at the beginning of January 1601 the King sent off the captured banners to Henriette, at the same time that he proceeded to Lyons to meet Marie de Médicis, who had landed in France some time previously, with an immense following.

A terrible accident had in the meantime occurred to ruin Henriette's hopes. A flash of lightning struck the room in which she was, and passed under her bed. The fright she then experienced was so great that the Marquise de Verneuil brought into the world a still-born



QUEEN MARIE DE MEDICIS
Second wife of Henri IV.

son. This misfortune occurred in July 1600. Thus, although the King's angry threats, which had succeeded to his prayers, had proved unavailing to compel the Marquis d'Entragues and his daughter to deliver up the promise of marriage, fate had intervened at a fortunate moment upon the side of the perjured King, who was, however, still captivated with the girl whom he did not choose to marry.

A couple of months after the misfortune, in which the delighted Sully saw the intervention of Providence to prevent the success of Henriette's manœuvres, she had followed Henri almost to the seat of war, to Lyons and to Chambéry in Savoy, vainly hoping to the last to induce the King to redeem his promise. At the former city she had been accorded a triumphal welcome, there being a precedent for such a reception of a Royal *maîtresse en titre* from the fact that Lyons had treated the beautiful Diane de Poitiers in a similar manner in the time of Henri II.

From this time, however, seeing that the marriage of the King would soon be an accomplished fact, Henriette, whom nothing would mollify, began to avenge herself. She commenced by treating with disdain the flags which the King had sent to her, and which had, as it happened, been captured by Sully at Charbonnières, a place which he had taken. These banners were not retained by the Marquise de Verneuil ; she sent them away, to be placed in the Church of Saint Just, at Lyons, as she had no use for them herself.

The celebrated conspiracy of the Duc de Biron, which eventually cost that great noble his head, had commenced during the war in Savoy. In this, while the Comte d'Auvergne took an important part, the Marquis d'En-

tragues had also a share. Although there is no proof that Henriette was personally involved in the intrigues which then took place with Savoy and with Spain, it seems more than probable that she was privy to her father's plottings, caused, no doubt, from a feeling of vengeance against the King.

Knowing that, henceforth, she could not hope to become the King's wife, and aware how she held him through the senses, Henriette now determined to punish him by withdrawing herself from him. During the time of this conspiracy she accordingly wrote to Henri a long letter of adieu, and retired to a distance so as to be well beyond his reach.

Henri was, however, not the least affected by this epistle, which he, rightly, did not consider as final, especially as, for the moment, his volatile head was full of Marie de Médicis, of which young Princess he had received the most flattering descriptions.

To her he accordingly wrote often, and in terms of ever-increasing and most astounding familiarity and vulgarity. These were not, in the least, resented by the Florentine Princess, who does not seem to have been astonished, even when the King called her "my dear mistress," and explained that it was as a mistress, and not as a wife, that his heart was full of love for her. A perusal of these letters, and also many of the later ones from *Le Roi vert-galant* to Henriette, is not calculated to increase our respect for his memory, so plainly do they display the sensual tendencies which increased with his advancing years.

Upon leaving Savoy and reaching Lyons, upon the very cold night of January 9th, 1601, Henri IV., without declaring himself, first in disguise watched his new con-

sort at her supper. Then, although not yet married, he sent a polite message to Marie, to the effect that he had arrived on horseback, cold, and without a bed, and asked from her hospitality for the night in her chamber. To this request Marie consented without any demur, and on January 17th they were married.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Henri enslaved by the Marquise

1600—1608

THE official marriage of Henri IV., by the Papal Legate, took place at Lyons, on January 17th, 1601, and on January 18th he left the newly made wife, with whom he had been living *maritalement* for a week before their nuptials were solemnised.

Travelling by post, the King proceeded to Paris, where he rejoined Henriette d'Entragues upon January 20th, and made her his apologies for having married another woman. Apparently, these apologies were received in a more amiable spirit than might have been expected; but very shortly afterwards Henri was once more with the young Queen, who followed him to Paris. There the Marquise de Verneuil lost no time in being presented to her, by the Duchesse de Nemours, which introduction enraged the Queen.

The first-born child of the Queen, which came into the world only one month before the second of the Marquise, was probably the son of Orsino Orsini, one of the cousins and *cavalieri serventi*, whom Marie had brought with her from Italy. This son, afterwards Louis XIII., had nothing of the Frenchman in his appearance, but was of the pure Italian type, not German, like his half-Austrian mother.

The date of the birth of Louis XIII. was September 27th, 1601, while that of Henriette's son, Gaston-Henri by name, was October 27th, 1601. This boy was made Bishop of Metz in childhood. He married later, and became Duc de Verneuil.

Perpetual conflicts now took place between Henri and the Marquise de Verneuil, to appease whom he forced Sully to send her six thousand crowns, just in order to keep her quiet.

A plot, in which the Queen had a hand, to ruin Henriette, now took place. It was of a despicable character, and the prime movers in the affair were that busybody, the Prince de Joinville, the younger brother of the young Duc Charles de Guise, and a lady of the volatile stock of Babou de la Bourdaisière.

Henriette, following out her plan for humiliating her Royal lover, was first faithless to Henri IV. with Joinville and then with others, including the Duc de Guise.

Joinville basely gave the letters which he had received from the Marquise, to the Duchesse de Villars, who was Juliette d'Estrées, one of Gabrielle's sisters, and had at one time attracted the King's attention. With Madame de Villars Joinville was now on the best of terms, and this neglected lady, who bore rancour against the King in her heart, with the young Queen's knowledge, passed the incriminating letters on to Henri IV.

Henri was furious, and sent the Comte de Lude as his Ambassador, to reproach his false mistress. Not in the least alarmed, Henriette merely sneered and denied that she had ever written the letters, which she said were forgeries.

There was such a general outcry over this affair in which Bellegarde, whom Henriette hated, was likewise

concerned, that Joinville chose the part of declaring, with Henriette, that the letters were false and had been forged by the secretary of the Duc de Guise. Merely for a joke, said the Prince de Joinville, had he given the letters to Madame de Villars. The result was that, while Henriette remained triumphant, the Duchesse de Villars was exiled from Paris, and the Prince de Joinville sent off to Hungary. According to Lestoille, the angry King had first given the order to have him slain with a poniard, a fate from which he escaped.

Henriette, restored to favour, was now brought into the Louvre by Henri IV., and given apartments close to those of the Queen.

The family of Royal children in the Louvre, of every description, went on increasing. There were two new arrivals to swell the list at the end of 1602 and beginning of 1603; the Queen's daughter, Élizabeth de France, being born two months before Gabrielle-Angélique, the daughter of the Marquise.

In the year 1603 a new and very serious plot was formed against the King; there being concerned in it, with the Comte d'Auvergne and the Duc de Bouillon, both Henriette and her father. The conspiracy was discovered at the beginning of 1604, at which time we also find Henri piteously complaining to Sully that Henriette is playing the prude with him, and making the excuse of devotion to refuse to live with him on the old familiar terms.

Henriette's half-brother, d'Auvergne, was, although surrounded by armed men, captured by a ruse and thrust into the Bastille. Here, in a cowardly manner, this bastard Prince gave away the names of all concerned in the conspiracy, not forgetting to throw a considerable

share of the blame upon the shoulders of his sister Henriette.

Sully now held up before the eyes of the King his recent ideals of glory, in a proposed attack on Spain, which was concerned in the plot, and begged his master to forget anything else than his grand projects and to treat the conspirators as they deserved.

Henri was, however, at this time involved so deeply in quarrels with both his wife and his mistress, who were also quarrelling with each other, that conspiracies against the State scarcely affected him.

Henriette was, however, put under arrest for a time in one of her own houses, while her father and her half-brother were condemned to death. Upon the eventual delivery of the long-desired promise of marriage into the King's hands in July 1604, the Marquis d'Entragues was set at liberty, and Henriette also, merely the Comte d'Auvergne being detained in the Bastille.

Henriette had behaved with the greatest *sang-froid* over this affair, in which, among others, was concerned her confessor, the Père Archange, the natural son of Marguerite de Valois by Champvallon.

When the Marquise de Verneuil was examined, she expressed herself boldly as follows :

"Death has nothing to frighten me; on the contrary, I desire it. If the King should deprive me of my life people will, at all events, say that he has put his wife to death. I was Queen before the Italian woman. In any case, I have only three things to demand from the King : a pardon for my father, a rope for my brother, and justice for myself." When the King found Henriette in tears at his feet, he weakly mingled his own tears with hers.

During this time, in order to be revenged upon his faithless sweetheart, who disdained to conceal her immoralities, and even invented false affairs merely to annoy the King, this latter amused himself with other ladies. Principal among these was a lovely girl, Jacqueline de Bueil, whom the King provided with the title of Comtesse de Moret, and likewise supplied with a dummy husband.

Although from 1604 until 1610, when he was assassinated, Henri IV. remained on good terms with Jacqueline, he always found her wanting in the smart conversation by which Henriette was distinguished. In spite, therefore, of all her misdemeanours, not the least of which was to speak continually in the most abominable manner of the Queen, who demanded vengeance, the King returned to the Marquise again and again, who was, however, compelled for a time to leave Paris and live upon her estate of Verneuil.

When the King discovered her desk full of compromising love-letters it was in vain that Sully urged him once more to be firm; for what did he do but merely send the Minister, for the hundredth time, to expostulate with Henriette upon her behaviour. "Notable imprudence!" remarks Michelet, "humiliated and under the yoke of this pardon, and compelled to suffer this love, she became henceforth insupportable."

Whatever may have been the faults of Marie de Médicis, with her Orsini, her Concini, and female favourite Leonora Galigaï, matters would never have proceeded to extremes between her and Henri had it not been for his lowering, and base, passion for Henriette, which left him without an atom of pride or self-respect. At one time that excellent peace-maker Sully took it

upon himself to speak seriously to the Queen, and to give her some advice as to how to behave so as to keep her husband at home. He told Marie that Henri did not like to see women sitting glum and silent, but to laugh and talk to him, to tell him merry stories, and listen to his own in turn.

The Florentine, who was naturally a remarkably uninteresting woman, did her very best to be good and to follow this advice for a time. No longer, when Henri came into the room, was he greeted by frowns or silence. Marie received him now merrily, with a welcoming smile, and made every effort to be agreeable and amusing.

For a short time all went well at the Court, and Sully was feeling delighted at his handiwork, when some spiteful letter or other arrived from the Marquise de Verneuil, and the King declared that he must go away at once to make up the quarrel in person. After that there was no more effort to make herself agreeable on the part of Marie de Médicis, while, herself wrapped up in her lover Concino Concini, with a feeling of absolute disgust she allowed her husband to do as he chose, and return to his wallowing in the mire with the woman who dragged him down.

Sully says that Henriette did all in her power to stir up strife, and that she knew all ways in which to do so.

The grave Minister remarks of her tricks that "there would be enough to make a large volume, to form the subject of a dozen comedies, some capable of degenerating into tragedies, so much did she, and others with her, indulge in intrigues, in their amours going so far as to have the banns of marriage published." Sully here refers to an engagement of marriage which Henriette, in order

to irritate the King, caused to be announced first with the Prince de Joinville, and then with the Duc de Guise. She caused the banns to be published in church in this latter case, but Guise declared that he had given no promise to marry the Marquise de Verneuil.

At length, as the Queen grew more and more angry at the assumption of Henriette that her children were the only legal ones, so did the Marquise become more sulky, and enact more frequently the part of a prude. She announced her coming marriage, and calmly informed the King that she expected him to give her a dowry of a hundred thousand crowns.

What perhaps helped to disgust Henri upon one occasion with the behaviour of his mistress, was the callousness she displayed when the Queen, with Gabrielle's son, the Duc de Vendôme, was nearly drowned in June 1606. The accident took place at the ford at Neuilly, and the Queen and Vendôme were both dragged out of the river by the hair of their heads by a brave noble named La Châtaigneraie.

Henriette scarcely ever spoke of the Queen to the King but as "Your fat banker's wife," but upon the occasion of this accident she was even more disagreeable than usual.

"Had I seen what happened," remarked the little spitfire to Henri, "I would have laughed with all my heart and cried out, as cheerfully as possible, 'The Queen is drinking!'"

This speech was immediately reported to Marie de Médicis, who was so furious with the King for not having resented or punished it that she refused to speak to him for a fortnight.

An almost final cause of anger arose between Henri

de Navarre and the Marquise de Verneuil in 1608. Having found his little son by her reading a Spanish prayer-book at the Mass, he then writes severely to Henriette, saying : "I do not choose that he shall even know that there is a Spain."

Shortly after this the King, at last worn out with his spiteful mistress, whose very perversity had hitherto attracted him, resigned her and allowed her to go her own way. To assist Henri in his laudable resolution, there was, of course, a new woman in the case. She was a beautiful girl of fifteen, Charlotte de Montmorency, daughter of the Constable of France. Until Henri died, however, he continued to see Henriette occasionally, who devoted herself to gluttony and became very fat. When the King wished to annoy anybody about the Court, he used to make a point of saying that he would go and visit the Marquise. Henriette, however, continued to send insulting messages, of which the following is a specimen.

Sending her young son to kiss the King's hands, this evil-tongued woman said to the boy, "Tell the King that, were you not already in existence, I would take care never to be your mother."

Never did the Marquise de Verneuil lose her rancour against Henri IV., and when, in 1610, he fell under the knife of the assassin Ravaillac, the evidence of her unfortunate friend Mademoiselle d'Escoman plainly showed that Henriette shared in the murderous plot with the Duc d'Epernon and Concino Concini, the Queen's favourite. As the Queen caused Mademoiselle d'Escoman to be walled up alive, rather than allow her evidence to be published, Henriette d'Entragues was never punished for her share in the conspiracy, which

turned the head of the half crazy fanatic, Ravaillac, and made of him a regicide. The Parliament of Paris was, indeed, too much afraid of its own skin to condemn any one—but, at the same time, when the judgment was delivered, in March 1612, the Parliament took care to exonerate no one, not even Marie de Médicis, the Queen-Regent.

Nevertheless, a kind of an infamous reputation clung to Henriette d'Entragues for the rest of her life. While she ate and drank her fill, and endeavoured hard, but in vain, to supply herself with a husband, the Marquise de Verneuil was looked upon with more than suspicion by all who had loved Henri IV. When Henriette found, by the marriage of Joinville to the Duchesse de Chevreuse and that of Guise to the widowed Duchesse de Montpensier, that her chances were ruined, she retired into obscurity. While she made of eating the business of her life, her tongue never lost its old trick of sharp sayings; she became, however, careful to spare the Queen, who had become all-powerful as Regent of France.

Henriette d'Entragues lived for twenty-three years after the death of Henri IV. She eventually died in 1633, at the age of fifty-four.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Last Days of Marguerite

1606—1615

When Marguerite de Valois returned at last to what she considered as her home, the people of Paris received her most cordially, and expressed their wishes that she would remain to live among them. Marguerite had now become decidedly fat, and she wore large masses of flaxen hair, to obtain which she kept several fair-haired footmen, whose heads were shaved at stated periods. She was, however, still celebrated by the poets and others as being "the beautiful Queen Marguerite," her reputation for beauty long outlasting the undoubted charms of her earlier years. To the old Catholic families, which considered the Bourbons as usurpers, anything connected with the ancient glories of the Valois seemed beautiful.

In order to please herself as much as the people, the last of the Valois now removed from the Château of Madrid, which was without the city, to a splendid hôtel, called the Hôtel de Sens, within the walls. She now became upon most affectionate terms with Henri, Marie de Médicis, and the Royal children, openly declaring that she intended to make the Dauphin the heir to all her estates. So intimate was the ex-Queen with the new Queen that we hear, upon one occasion, of Marguerite

being seen upon her knees by the side of Marie's bed, while Henri IV. was seated upon it with the Dauphin, and playing with a little dog.

In this dwelling, which had been previously occupied by various Cardinals, Marguerite installed her Court and lived in Royal fashion. She surrounded herself with wits, savants, pretty women, priests, poets, and good-looking young nobles; in every sense the hôtel of the Queen Marguerite must be considered as having been a Court and not as a mere salon. She chose to live in Royal style, and was treated as a Queen at her repasts, her plates and dishes being handed to her by her gentlemen.

Marguerite was the better able to live in the extravagant style that she loved owing to the fact that, fortunately for her, her law-suit with her nephew, the Comte d'Auvergne, had at length been decided by the Parliament in her favour.

It seems more than probable that the fact of Charles de Valois being confined in the Bastille, while his aunt was openly proclaiming her intention of making the Dauphin her heir, may have gained for Marguerite the good-will of the Court with the judges in this matter, which had dragged along for over a dozen years. Thus the knowledge of the King's wishes helped the Parliament to a tardy decision.

Upon the rights of the case alone, however, the Queen of Navarre should long since have been put in possession of the territories left by Catherine de Médicis to the Comte d'Auvergne, merely as a matter of spite and to oblige Henri III.

The production of the marriage contract of Catherine de Médicis, whose mother was a French Princess, Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, proved conclusively that,

all her male children being dead, her French estates should descend to Marguerite de Valois, the sole surviving female.

The delight of this Princess when informed, in a church, of the decision in her favour was so great that she instantly caused a *Te Deum* to be performed. While reserving to herself the usufruct of their income for her lifetime, she made over the immense estates by deed of gift to the King and the Dauphin, and now became quite at her ease.

As, like her brother Henri III., Marguerite was very fond of music, she now provided herself with a string band and also a choir of vocal musicians. She wrote verses to be set to music, occasionally sang herself in the chorus, or else played and sang solos to the lute.

While amusing herself with gay society, Marguerite did not forget her devotions; she visited hospitals, and made religious endowments upon a large scale. Unfortunately, however, advancing years had not had their expected effect upon the mode of living of this Princess, whose life continued to be as scandalous in Paris as it had been at Usson.

In spite of her great vanity of her high birth, her pride of being a Daughter of France, the divorced wife of Henri IV. never considered that it would be well for one in her exalted position to behave herself with anything like a becoming reticence.

Her continued love-affairs resulted, not very long after her establishing herself in the Hôtel de Sens, in a tragedy which cost two young lives. The Queen of Navarre had attached herself greatly to a young gentleman from Provence. She had made this young fellow,

whose name was Date de Saint-Julien, her page, and took him about with her everywhere. At the same time she had indulged in familiarities with another young man named Vermont, whose father and mother had long formed part of her household, and had indeed been left by her in charge of the Castle at Usson when she had come to Paris. Saint-Julien, aged twenty, and Vermont, aged eighteen, became rivals, and so bitter was the hatred of the latter for the favourite page that he resolved to murder him. Selecting an opportunity when Marguerite was returning with Saint-Julien from hearing the Mass, Vermont shot the page through the head with a pistol, by the side of her carriage. He attempted to fly, but was seized almost at once. According to the *Divorce Satyrique* Marguerite, wild with grief and rage, cried out: "Kill the rascal! hang him! strangle him! here, take my garters."

This boy of eighteen, although he was not fated to be strangled with the garters of his Royal mistress, was not allowed to live for twenty-four hours. The furious Marguerite sent to the King to ask for a speedy punishment to be inflicted; and he was executed on the morrow before the Hôtel de Sens, with Marguerite looking on from a window. The youth, before dying, gloried in his crime. When he was confronted with the corpse of his rival he merely turned it over to make sure that Date was quite dead, saying that if he was not he would finish him.

He walked gaily to the scaffold, hurled away the torch he had been given to hold in his hand, and flatly refused to demand pardon of the Queen, saying that, since he had succeeded in killing his enemy, he did not mind dying.

On the same day as the accomplishment of the final scene of this tragedy, Marguerite suddenly felt that she must fly from her house at all costs, for it had become horrible to her. The same afternoon she established herself in a large country house at Issy, just outside Paris, which she soon bought from the King's jeweller.

For some time after this tragedy the Queen behaved in an almost crazy way, from apprehension lest the family of Vermont should avenge themselves upon her, and she even begged from the King the order to have all the surviving Vermonts, male and female, exiled to an abbey which belonged to her in Rouergue. She also accused them of being implicated in the treason of the Comte d'Auvergne, and likewise of dabbling in magic and witchcraft.

When Henri IV. received all these foolish representations from his former wife he imagined that she was going mad from grief. Accordingly, to console her for the misfortune which she had experienced, he jocosely told Marguerite that he had in his Court plenty of squires as brave and gallant as Saint-Julien, and that when she wanted them he would willingly supply her with a dozen or so.

The heart of Date de Saint-Julien is supposed to have gone with the hearts of the rest of her deceased lovers into the pockets of the famous *vertugadin*, that of Vermont was not, however, honoured by being preserved in a similar manner.

It was not long before, giving up her hôtel at Issy, Marguerite moved across the Seine, where she built herself a regular palace just opposite to the Louvre. Although Henri IV. was always short of cash himself, and economically inclined, Marguerite contrived to ex-

tract from him very considerable sums for the erection of this magnificent hôtel.

The lately deceased Saint-Julien had been replaced in the amorous Queen's affections by a doughty squire or equerry named Bajaumont, on whose account she had many heart-burnings. Upon one occasion Bajaumont was unexpectedly attacked in a church, but made such good use of his sword as to escape uninjured. Then Marguerite lost no time in requesting Henri to throw the aggressor of her latest lover into the dungeons of For-l'Évêque, when the King was kind enough to gratify her.

The next thing that Henri IV. learned about Bajaumont was that he was seriously ill, and his former wife in despair in consequence. Henri had been visiting Marguerite, and was distressed at the news, for reasons which concerned himself.

Passing out through the apartment in which were the maids of honour, the King said to these young ladies, half mockingly, half seriously: "Pray to heaven for the recovery of Bajaumont, and I will give you all your fairings, for if he should happen to die, *Ventre saint-gris*! it would cost me ever so much more. For then the Queen will take this house in horror, and she will be wanting me to buy her a new one."

Bajaumont did not die, however, and thus Henri was relieved from his fears of having to put his hand in his pocket once more. The King learned, on the contrary, that the squire had gone out of favour, and he wrote to Marie de Médicis, in April 1608, to the effect that all the news that he had to communicate was that Queen Marguerite had beaten Bajaumont, who was anxious to be off.

The cause of the quarrel between Marguerite and her favourite was a simple matter of jealousy. He was not allowed to take his *congé* at that time, but the Queen sent away from her household the daughter of the Comte de Choisi, with whom she accused him of carrying on a flirtation.

When Marguerite complained, to the girl's father, that she was worth nothing, and had governed herself ill, she received a fitting reproof. The Comte de Choisi replied : "If by chance, Madame, you had happened to govern yourself as well, you would still be in possession of the Crown which you have lost."

As Marguerite continued to reside in Paris, she remained on good terms with Marie de Médicis, even for five years after the assassination of Henri IV., and before his death did much to reintroduce into the Court the old extravagant amusements of the Valois. Owing to her influence it was that the famous Court ballets became once more the fashion, and Queen Marguerite, whose skill and taste in such matters were unrivalled, frequently not only suggested the scenes, but superintended the rehearsals in person.

In the beginning of March 1615 Marguerite de Valois assisted at one of these ballets at the Louvre, but she was not then feeling very well. She was also considerably troubled about her money affairs, which were not at all well managed. Her last Sovereign action was to part with, or pledge for the sum of thirty-two thousand livres, two of the seigneuries of her Royal Duchy of Valois. These properties were named respectively Béthisy and De Verberie, and they were acquired by a Seigneur de Villers. After the successful accomplishment of this transaction Marguerite began to

feel worse, and upon March 26th her Grand Almoner, the Bishop of Grasse, warned the Queen to prepare for death. Thereupon she presented the Bishop with all her silver plate to keep in memory of her.

Upon the following day, March 27th, 1615, after executing a codicil to her will, by which she left a sum of money to the monks of Saint-Augustine, died Marguerite de Valois, Queen of France and Navarre and Duchesse de Valois. She was almost sixty-two years of age at the time of her decease, having been born on May 14th, 1553.

CHAPTER XL

Henri's Noble Design and Last Love

1609—1610

During the last ten years of his reign over France, Henri de Navarre, in spite of the time taken up by his foolish love-affairs, contrived to accomplish a vast amount for the benefit of his subjects. Assisted by the indefatigable Sully, he neglected nothing to improve the condition of the poorer orders, and it is upon this circumstance, more than his wars, that rests his claim to being considered as a great and humane King. Having gone into this matter fully elsewhere (*Sidelights on the Court of France*) we will do no more here than mention that this most extraordinary man was as indefatigable in doing good, in a manner to affect the happiness of millions, as in doing evil, in ways which scarcely injured any but himself.

In his efforts to do good Henri naturally came into contact with the great nobles who oppressed the poor. Among these was, notably, that former *mignon* of Henri III., Jean de la Valette, Duc d'Epernon, who always opposed him, and whom he deprived of the Government of the fortified city of Metz. D'Epernon was, however, a very strong man and a good soldier, therefore, since he was not openly in revolt against

him, Henri considered it wiser to leave him at liberty. He did not wish to behead d'Epernon; although his conduct was continually suspicious, Henri had personally suffered so much in his humanity from the decapitation of the Duc de Biron that he wished to resort to no more extreme measures. To imprison him, he thought, would be useless, perhaps worse than useless, since d'Epernon was upon intimate terms with the Queen's favourite, Concini; and a measure of that description would be only calculated to raise strife against himself in his own household. D'Epernon was accordingly left unmolested in a grand position as Governor of one of the southern provinces, and well treated by the King whenever he was present at the Court. Of this liberty Jean de la Valette took advantage for several years to plot with Henriette d'Entragues, who resented her compelled servility to the King's pleasures, and with Concini, who, with Marie de Médicis, aimed at ruling France. Between them and their allies, the Jesuits, it was more by indirect than by direct suggestion that they eventually armed the hand which deprived France of the first of its rulers who had ever given a moment's thought to the interests of the poor. These had hitherto been squeezed most unmercifully by both nobles and tax-gatherers, and compelled to suffer in silence for a thousand years.

During the last few years of his life the contest between the Queen and the King became more than ever bitter. While, the insolent Italian, Concini ruled Marie de Médicis absolutely, she treated Henri with the greatest contumely; at her saucy favourite's suggestion even sending back dishes which the King sent to his wife from his own table, asserting that they were poisoned.

Henri IV. accordingly withdrew himself for a time from the Court, where the Queen was, as he knew, intriguing against him with Spain, and repaired to the Arsenal, where he lived with the Duc de Sully.

Europe was at this time in a pitiable condition. Holland had been suffering terribly from the cruelties of Spain, while Austria, the close ally of Spain, was, under the Emperor, perpetrating one act of aggression after another upon the Germanic provinces, Duchies, and Principalities, the greater number of which now belonged to the Reformed religion.

To relieve distressed Europe, to crush the ruthless aggressors, to save the homes of the Protestants from the torch and their wives and daughters from the brutality of a soldiery worthy of nothing but the name of banditti, became the dream of Henri IV.

Backed up by Sully alone, for weeks and months in the Arsenal Henri IV. secretly wove a plot by which, after crushing the power of Spain, humbling the pride of Austria, and returning their liberties to the oppressed peoples, he should inaugurate an era of peace and prosperity for the whole of Europe.

It was a great, a noble idea! While Marie de Médicis, in whose veins ran Spanish blood, was negotiating for the marriage of two of her young children to two children of Philip III. of Spain, without breathing a word of their intentions, Henri IV. and Sully made preparations for the conflict.

The armies were gradually got into splendid condition, three of them were unostentatiously massed upon the various frontiers, the artillery, in which Sully took so much pride, was likewise carefully distributed ready for the coming onslaught. At the same time Henri was

cunning enough to deceive his two Jesuit Confessors, Fathers Ignace and Cotton, notably the latter who was constantly urging him to tie closer his relations with the two great Catholic Powers. While pretending to follow the Jesuit's advice, Henri was in the greatest secrecy negotiating, on the other hand, alliances with Holland, the Protestant German Principalities, and the Duchy of Savoy, which latter was now willing and ready to fall into his arms. While matters were in this condition, and three noted Protestant commanders : Sully, Lesdiguières and La Force, appointed to the three armies which were ready to take the field, Holland, utterly worn out, was obliged to give in to Spain. In the year 1609, moreover, when the gallant Henri de Navarre was already gaily trying on his new suits of armour at the Arsenal, the Duke of Savoy declared that it would still take him some time to get ready for action.

Disappointed at the delay, but resolved only to strike the harder when the time should come, Henri IV. found himself, instead of once more mounting his war-horse, compelled for a time to inaction. Alas ! for the old adage that Satan finds some evil still for idle hands to do. Upon this occasion Satan was represented by the wicked little god Cupid once more, and his bow and arrows were held in the fairest hands in France. The owner of those hands, Charlotte-Marguerite de Montmorency, was, by his second wife, the fascinating Louise de Budos, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the Connétable Duc de Montmorency, formerly known as Damville.

It was at the rehearsal of one of the ballets introduced by Marguerite to the Louvre that Henri IV. first beheld this lovely daughter of a lovely mother, of the latter of whom the beauty had been indeed considered as diabolic,



RAVAILLAC, ASSASSIN OF HENRI IV.
(From an old Print)

and derived by magic direct from Satan's workshop. Louise de Budos had died young in the zenith of her charms, when her mysterious and premature end was looked upon as a piece of public good fortune, since it delivered men and women from the danger of seeing, and therefore either loving or hating her, both being equally dangerous. This mother left only two children, a girl and a boy, the former of whom inherited her mother's charms but in a softened fashion, and her ambitious views.

As Princesse de Condé, Charlotte-Marguerite was famed throughout Europe as possessing all that nature could give. Even the Papal Legate, Cardinal Bentivoglio, was enthusiastic in his eulogies of the charms of this child, and his contemporaries were unanimous in their praises. How well deserved they must have been we can judge from the fact that the spiteful Mademoiselle de Guise could write of her in the following eulogistic strain :

"The Queen having resumed the wish to carry out the ballet already proposed, among the ladies named to take part in it the incomparable Princesse de Condé was one. She was then so young that she was only just emerging from childhood, her beauty was miraculous, and all her actions so agreeable that she was a complete marvel in everything."

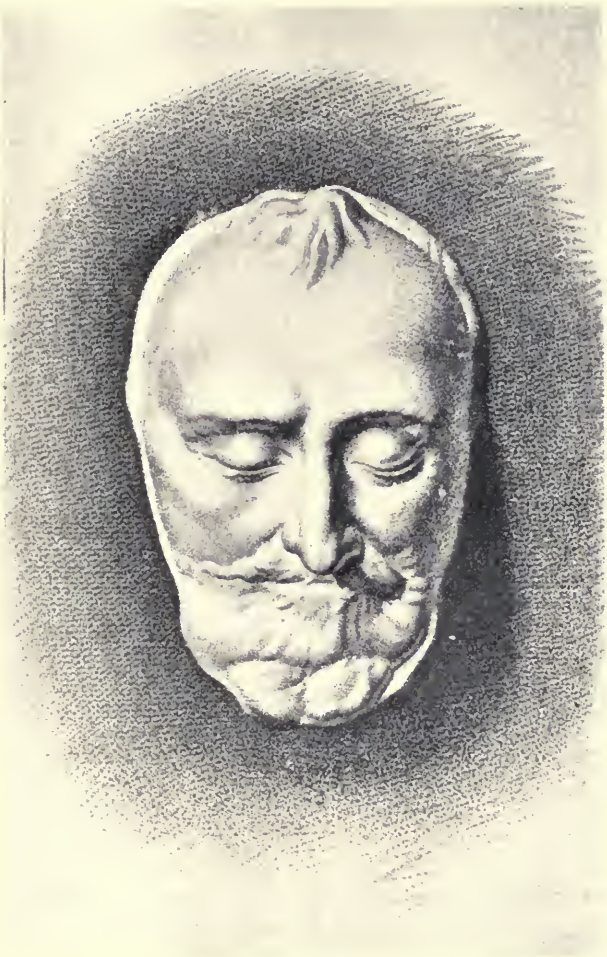
Tallemant des Réaux and the poet Malherbe, whom Henri employed to write his sonnets for him, both describe the all too susceptible King as having been thunder-struck upon the first occasion of his beholding this wonderful young beauty. It will be interesting to see what Tallemant des Réaux has to say about the celebrated meeting of Henri IV. and the "Nymph of

Diana," but previously we must make an explanation. This is that the King and Queen, invariably at loggerheads on all points, quarrelled over the ladies to take part in this ballet, as they had done on previous occasions. So angry was Henri when the ladies to be selected for the performance to be called "The Nymphs of Diana" were not those whom he had chosen that he refused to take any interest in the matter or to attend the practices, which took place in the Louvre. He even kept the door of his cabinet closed, so that he should not be compelled to see the Queen and the young ladies passing along the corridor to go to the saloon wherein their figures and posturing were practised. One day, however, his door happening to be ajar as they passed, Henri's curiosity was aroused by their dress. Presently he accordingly rose, followed them, and glanced into the ball-room. Thereupon he beheld she who was described as "a new star of beauty who was the admiration of all the world" by an author who also says that Charlotte de Montmorency "avait la taille riche, les cheveux blonds, le teint blanc et net, le visage accompli de toutes les parties qui forment une parfaite beauté."

Tallemant des Réaux gives the following account of the circumstances which brought this youthful paragon into the life of the King:

"The Queen some time later had a ballet, in which she put the most beautiful of the Court. Believe, then, that she did not forget Mademoiselle de Montmorency, who might have been thirteen or fourteen years old. One could behold nothing so beautiful nor so sprightly as she, although there were others quite as *spirituelle* at any rate.

"There had been some dispute between the Queen and the King over this ballet. He wanted to have



PLASTER CAST OF HENRI IV. OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE
(*Taken during the French Revolution, 183 years after his death*)

Madame de Moret take part in it. The Queen did not wish this, and she wanted Madame de Verderonne, whom the King would not have. They were both of them wrong in those whom they wished for and right in those they did not want. In the end, however, the Queen got the best of it."

Here our author goes on to discuss the quarrel, even describing how the King would slam his door as the ladies passed by, until one day, by chance, he came out as we have described. Then, when Henri glanced into the room where the rehearsal was taking place, the ladies, clad as nymphs, were in the act of raising their javelins as if they would throw them. "Mademoiselle de Montmorency found herself *vis-à-vis* to the King as she raised her dart, and it seemed as though she sought to pierce him with it. The King has said since that she performed this action with such a good grace that effectively he was wounded by it in the heart. He thought that he would faint."

This pretty scene, with which the King was so deeply affected that he fell wildly in love with the nymph on the spot, took place on January 16th, 1609, and, as Charlotte de Montmorency was born on May 11th, 1594, it will be perceived that she was only fourteen years and eight months old at the time of her meeting with the fifty-six-year-old Monarch. When the extreme youth of the damsel is taken into consideration, it seems to us that a great deal too much has been made of her complicity in a love-affair which almost set Europe in a blaze. It was, however, the fashion to treat girls of fourteen as women in those days, and accordingly the historians have not failed to credit the young lady who became Princesse de Condé with full responsibility for

her own actions. It is evident, from all accounts, that Charlotte was from the first so vastly flattered with the effect that her charms produced upon the King that she appeared to share his passion, and did all in her power to encourage it, while as for Henri, in the words of d'Aubigné : "There appeared a notable change in his old age, heated up by a violent love, of which the brasier threw off the desires in clear flames, and dissipated in smoke the fear and its vapours."

This sentence of the brave d'Aubigné, which is certainly more ambiguous than his usual style, may be taken to mean that Henri seemed rejuvenated by his senile love, and other writers bear the historian out in this respect.

The King lost no time in determining to make of this fresh young rose the last flower in his nosegay of fifty-six chosen blossoms, and there seemed none to object to his so doing, least of all that old warrior the Duc de Montmorency, Constable of France, who appeared if anything rather flattered at his master's intentions, which he hoped, by judicious management, might result finally in a Crown for his daughter. For the behaviour of the Queen with Concini was so scandalous as to make a second divorce by no means an impossibility.

For the sake of *les bien séances*, however, it was determined, in the interim, to provide the lovely young Charlotte with a husband, who was to be paid to make himself scarce. The young Henri, Prince de Condé, was provided for this purpose. Although known to be of illegitimate birth, he had been whitewashed by the King, to whom he owed everything in the world.

The marriage took place, the Prince was highly paid, and for the space of three months he left his bride alone.

During the whole of that time, however, the unfortunate Royal lover was ill with an access of the gout.

Before the King had recovered, Condé made up his mind that he would take his wife unto himself. He appeared suddenly and bore her off, and not all the outcry of the outraged King nor of Montmorency *père* availed to make him bring her back again. Disguised as a postilion, the romantic and lovesick King contrived to see his young sweetheart on several occasions, when, finding that Charlotte was about to run away from him, the youthful Condé contrived, by a trick, to drive the beautiful girl off to Brussels, where he claimed, and obtained, Spanish protection. In Brussels, however, Condé indulged in treasonable practices against his too confiding kinsman, the King of France; whereupon, as the result of diplomatic action, it seemed by no means unlikely that either he or his wife might be restored to Henri IV., in order to avert the threatened war.

How the matter would have been decided is uncertain, as the dagger-thrust of Ravaillac put an end to all the hopes of Henri de Navarre, with his life, upon the 14th day of May in the year 1610.

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